THE POLITICS
OF FEMALE HOMEWORK:
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
SPITALFIELDS, 1880 - 1909

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the development of female homework as a social and political issue from 1880-1909. Special attention is given to homework in Spitalfields, East London. The study examines the formation and conduct of the campaign to reform the law and preserve the 'sanctity' of the Victorian home. We focus on the role of philanthropists, social reformers, the medical profession and the Press in bringing about greater public awareness of the problem of women's homeworking; and evaluate the impact of the campaign on government policy and legislation. The thesis traces the formulation and definition of the homework problem in four distinct but overlapping phases: as a public health issue; as a 'dangerous trade'; as a problem of Motherhood, Race and Empire; and finally of underpaid labour. The Parliamentary processes which led to the 1909 Trade Boards Act are examined. The supportive response to the legislation by The Women's Industrial Council and women trade unionists (Clementina Black and Mary MacArthur); by the militant women's suffrage campaign (the Women's Social and Political Union); and by the Press (The Lancet and The Daily News) and the Anti-Sweating League (George Cadbury, Gertrude Tuckwell et al.) is considered as indicative of the large measure of consensus on homework which was to remain in force for more than half a century.
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The origins of this thesis lie in research I pursued earlier for a book on the activities of the militant campaigners for women's suffrage, the Women's Social and Political Union. Among the Suffragette Collection at the Museum of London I discovered there were several pamphlets and handbills condemning homework. My interest was stimulated further by the discovery in the Museum's collection of the 1906 Daily News Sweated Industries Exhibition catalogue containing a number of remarkable photographs of East End homeworkers who were used as 'living exhibits'. This material led me to research the history of the politics and social policy of women's homework during the late Victorian and Edwardian period in Spitalfields.

I am particularly grateful to Professor William Fishman who introduced me to Queen Mary and Westfield College, advised me on sources for the period and the place, and 'held my hand' on a regular basis. I am especially indebted to him for his expert advice on Jewish East London. My supervisor, Dr Wayne Parsons, kept me on the PhD path with regard to the organisation of material, content and style; and to whom I owe more than I can say. Dr David Feldman has guided me through material with which I was not wholly familiar. I have also greatly benefited from the post-graduate seminars in the department of political studies.

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1. A LONDON HOMEWORKER CARRYING SKIRTS, c.1900
THE MANSELL COLLECTION
On May 10th 1990 a three day international conference on homeworking ended in the Netherlands. Organised by I.R.E.N.E., the International Restructuring Education Network Europe, the delegates issued a series of recommendations designed to improve legislation for homeworkers worldwide. Speakers and homeworkers from the United Kingdom, West Germany, the Netherlands, Australia, India, Hong Kong, Malaysia and the Philippines testified to the existence of homework, its extent and its exploitative nature. They concluded that: 'Homework exists in probably every country of the world and is not a particular feature of less developed economies. Millions of workers, the vast majority of them women, are involved and their numbers are increasing.' It is not a marginal activity but 'is an integral part of very sophisticated international production processes'. Their demands included: a guaranteed minimum wage; good and safe working conditions; written contracts; parity with other workers for social security benefits; and full employee status in the labour market. (1)

Thus, a hundred years on from the Victorians' vilification of homework and homeworkers, it remains a contemporary social problem. Newspaper headlines since 1988 convey the essence of the debate: The Observer's 'Hardship Hides Behind Doors of Homeworkers'; The Guardian's 'Making Way for Homeworkers'; The Morning Star's 'Justice for Homeworkers! and 'Forgotten Homeworkers'; The Observer's 'Charity's Labour Begins at Home' and The Guardian's 'Stitching up
the Silent Majority'.\(^2\) Publications over the past fifteen years which have dealt with the issue include: The Fabians' *An End to Homework?* (1975); The Low Pay Unit's *The Wages of Fear* (1978) and *Sweated Labour: Homeworking in Britain Today* (1984) and their most recent investigation, *Wages Councils and Homeworkers* (1990). In 1985 the T.U.C. published a statement on homeworking, and the Department of Employment's survey, *Home-Based Work in Britain*, carried out in 1981, was published in 1987 to widespread Press and political interest. Local authority interest in homework is witnessed by Birmingham City Council's Report on their own locally based National Homeworking Unit, and *The Report of the London-Wide Homeworking Conference*, both published in 1989. 'Teleworkers', who had received positive press coverage, have been the focus of concern expressed by the T.U.C. and the Low Pay Unit as early as 1984.\(^3\) Although they have the gloss of modern technology, the workforce, usually women, are just as exploited and hidden as manufacturing homeworkers.

The past twenty years have again seen homeworkers identified as the most vulnerable group within the British workforce. The word 'scandal' continues to be used to describe the pay and conditions of a workforce which is estimated to number a million,\(^4\) mostly women, some earning as little as twenty pence an hour. In the early 70s, The Low Pay Unit\(^5\) was the first to alert the public to the survival of this 'hidden army' in the economy which had been assumed to have disappeared in the inter-war years.\(^6\)

It is the purpose of this thesis to analyse the way in which the problem of homework was identified, defined and politicised. In our period, 1880-1909, homework and homeworkers were taken up and investigated by a campaign led by individuals and organisations to stop working-class women doing homework. These included, the medical
profession; women trade unionists; individuals like George Cadbury and Clementina Black and the Women's Industrial Council and the Edwardian Liberal Government. This campaign resulted in putting 'homework' and 'homeworkers' on the statute book in the Trade Boards Act of 1909. The thesis focuses in particular on homeworkers in Spitalfields, East London.

Underpinning a debate which spanned thirty years was the prevailing belief in the sanctification of 'The Home' as a holy place tended by women who nurtured their families and were its moral guardians. Hence, the invasion of the home by homework was an affront, almost a blasphemy, to those who accepted and upheld the distinction between the private and the public spheres of Victorian domestic ideology. The thesis demonstrates the centrality of 'domestic ideology' concerning 'The Home' to the debate surrounding homework and homeworkers.

Until the late '70s the study of homework had been neglected. Since then it has been the subject of several studies. Duncan Bythell's The Sweated Trades (1978), is an account by an economic historian of outwork in nineteenth century Britain. Bythell does not advance a clear definition of homework and the difference between it and outwork does not emerge, although his preface notes that readers are entitled to 'words of apology' as the book is no more than a synthesis of secondary sources and 'dependent on the writings of other scholars, both past and present'. Bythell writes: 'One cannot help ... escape the conclusion that homework, however monstrous the suffering it might still entail for individuals, was statistically insignificant in the first decade of the present century. And at the risk of being branded a heartless revisionist, one cannot avoid reiterating E.H. Hunt's judgement after discussing
sweated women workers of London's East End, that the attention lavished on them by contemporaries and by some later historians, has been 'highly disproportionate'.

In 1984 James Schmiechen's *Sweated Industries and Sweated Labour* described the importance of outwork in the London clothing trades from 1860 to the outbreak of the First World War. His thesis is that during this period outwork was no marginal activity, no fossil of a pre-industrial age, but a vital part of the capital's clothing industry whose growth had been accelerated by increasing factory and workshop legislation. While this seminal book is primarily concerned with outwork, it makes a useful distinction between outworkers and homeworkers: 'All homeworkers were outworkers, but not all outworkers worked at home - some worked in the homes of others or in jerry-built workrooms.'

Jenny Morris' *Women Workers and the Sweated Trades*, 1986, sets out to examine the origins of the 1909 Trade Boards Act, the first piece of minimum wage legislation, and devotes more space to homeworkers than her predecessors, but they are not discussed as a separate group within the sweated workforce. Her theoretical framework is social policy and social control: 'The primary motivation (for the Trade Boards Act) was the concern felt, particularly by some influential employers, about the harm that the sweated trades were doing to the quality of labour and to the existing social order.' She sets out to demonstrate the process by which the Trade Boards Act was passed as an illustration of the importance of social control to the development of social policy. She makes some links between homeworkers then and now.

Shelley Pennington and Belinda Westover's *A Hidden Workforce: Homeworkers in England 1850-1985*, 1989, is the most recent historical
contribution. It is the first book devoted exclusively to the socio-economic history of homework and is located in the framework of English women's changing status in the years reviewed. It is a broad and descriptive account of homework and homeworkers and, importantly, it begins to fill in the gaps in our knowledge about homeworkers from the Twenties through to their rediscovery in the Seventies.¹⁷)

Sheila Allen and Carol Walkowitz's *Homeworking: Myths and Realities* (1987), is a feminist analysis of today's homeworkers which takes a sociological rather than an historical approach. They argue that until the 1980s homeworking trailed behind other areas of feminist research, partly because of interpretations of Marx's analysis of waged work and its liberating effect on women's domestic lives, and the tendency for feminists to focus their studies on women's unpaid domestic labour and relationships with family members. Allen and Walkowitz aimed to provide 'a corrective to previous attitudes to and neglect of interest in the relationship between home and waged labour.'¹⁸)

Social policy during the period considered in this thesis, though not policy on women's homework, has been analysed by historians of social policy, pre-eminently José Harris in 1972, Pat Thane in 1978 and 1982 and more recently Kathleen Jones in 1990.¹⁹) Pat Thane showed the value of using an historical approach in the study of social policy in *The Origins of British Social Policy* (1978); it was amongst the first studies to examine specific areas of policy and to suggest how social problems came to be identified and the reasons why various legislative recommendations were made, and how ideas were transmitted from individuals to pressure groups, to civil servants and government ministers. Thane argues that her book served as 'an antidote' to the social betterment approach of social policy
history.\(^{(20)}\) Harris, Thane and Jones, have all dealt with issues which were the subject of intense political interest during the period reviewed by this thesis: unemployment; The Poor and The Poor Law; public health; housing; and the situation which informed decisions to lay the foundation of the Welfare State. Homeworkers, however, have not been a prominent feature of their studies.

Jane Lewis (1984), Philippa Levine (1987), Ellen Jordan (1989), Jane Lewis in collaboration with Celia Davies (1991), and Sonya Rose (1992), have charted the issues surrounding the regulation of women's employment in the period covered in this thesis. They have described and analysed the wider political forces at work, and considered those women within nineteenth century feminism and women's trade unionism who shaped and informed and criticised government campaigns to legislate on women's presence in the workforce. They show how the arguments both for and against protective labour legislation for women divided nineteenth century feminism. Jane Lewis's *Women in England 1870-1950: Sexual Divisions and Social Change*, for example, argues that the large scale removal of paid employment from the home was accompanied by a redefinition of work which involved women in a prolonged and complex period of adjustment. The separation of the home and the workplace, Lewis maintains, was to the detriment of working women as they increasingly found themselves at the heart of debates which were determined to prescribe which, if any, paid work they were to be permitted to do, and the nature of their wifely, motherly and domestic duties.\(^{(21)}\) Philippa Levine's 1987 study *Victorian Feminism 1850-1900* illustrates the connections between the major feminist campaigns around education, suffrage, paid employment, trade unionism, marital and legal reforms and access to the professions. She argues that while these were in essence single-
issue battles, they were not separate from each other as they drew on
the same women who were often the most senior members of several
organisations. Each campaign drew on a core of socially homogeneous
women (mostly middle-class and urban) who saw each battle as one
facet of much broader aims and objectives. Theirs was more an
inclusive feminism than just political action - as they created
social and intellectual networks which remained largely unchallenged
until the late 1880s, when two strands of feminist thought emerged,
bourgeois and socialist, a direct result of the increasingly vocal
debates on the issues surrounding the regulation of women's
employment. Levine notes that the split was not between middle-class
and working-class feminists, as between 'socialist' women and
'working' women. While socialist women supported the principle of
state intervention in employment practices, many working women agreed
with some of their bourgeois 'sisters' that a potentially arduous,
even dangerous job, was preferable to unemployment and
destination. (22)

Ellen Jordan's study of the exclusion of women from British
industry (1989) focused on why women were so unevenly distributed
between various industries. While there were no obvious economic
reasons to reject women - they were cheaper to employ, and allegedly
more docile - they were kept out of certain industries. (23) She
concludes that a 'domestic' ideology did play a part in the formation
of an 'androcentric blindness' amongst middle-class employers. Where
industries evolved from a 'proto-industrial family' it was accepted
that women's work should remain. However, where an industry did not
have such origins in a pre-industrial form of organisation, middle-
class assumptions resulted in men forming the totality of the
workforce and their views on domestic ideology remained largely

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unchallenged as a consequence. In this way many of the new and expanding industries created by the Industrial Revolution employed only men. (24)

In 1991 Jane Lewis and Celia Davies discussed the positions of feminists and anti-feminists, employers and employees, trade unionists and politicians in the late nineteenth century 'equality versus difference' debate surrounding protective legislation at the turn of the century, and afterwards. Their survey, which spans a hundred years, is a particularly helpful overview for the topic of homework. They conclude that just as Edwardian homeworkers faced a loss of livelihood at the hands of protective legislation, homeworkers today are faced with the bleak choice of low pay, or no pay. (25) Legislation designed to 'protect' workers has been amply demonstrated to have the reverse effect, to expose and invariably to punish.

Sonya Rose's Limited Livelihoods: Gender and Class in Nineteenth Century England (1992) is a seminal study of the role of gender in the reorganisation of lives and livelihoods in the last five decades of the nineteenth century. This thesis is indebted to Rose's conceptualisations which have provided a helpful framework for the present study. Rose points out that there has been a failure to recognise the importance of gender as a core feature of the social fabric and its transformation. (26) Her work, which builds on analysis of class and family relations and labour politics, provides an insight into understanding the dynamics of the politicisation of women engaging in homework. (27) In the course of this research, the publication of Rose's study confirmed the author's contention that homework was generated by a particular conjunction of familial, political, cultural and economic factors. However, homework's
profitability and flexibility depended heavily on the contradiction between wage-earning and mothering. Further, Rose agrees that once a problem has been defined as one requiring state action, the ensuing debates that produce laws or public policies enter the public domain and contribute a special weight to the developing discourse about the problem that the laws or policies are meant to solve. As we shall see, this is how the politicisation of women working at home took place. The debates about these women resulted from the ideas on gender of the dominant group. Thus the State legitimised these representations of gender in the debate surrounding homeworkers of Spitalfields.

Angela John and Patricia Malcolmson have made important contributions to the study of protective legislation in certain industries. John's *By the Sweat of their Brow: women workers at Victorian coal mines* (1984), and Malcolmson's *English Laundresses: a social history 1850-1930*, (1986), offer detailed analyses of the concerted attempts to prevent, or at least to control, the work of coal surface workers and laundresses in nineteenth century England. These campaigns have a resonance with the efforts to stop women working in their own homes. They were contemporaneous with the war waged on homeworkers discussed in this thesis. While the vehement criticisms of all these kinds of women's employment varied in details, all three campaigns shared a common loathing of women earning a living in ways which were considered unseemly to the fast growing consensual opinion. All three occupations experienced peaks and troughs in political, and hence public interest, and, ultimately, despite attempts to resist protective legislation from certain quarters, all three succumbed to degrees of legislative control. Homeworkers did not exist in a vacuum, and, as John and
Malcolmson have indicated, they were not the only group of workers exposed to unwelcome scrutiny. Their counterparts at the pit surface, and in private and public laundries, had to mobilise and try to find their voice. Robert Gray's recent article 'Factory Legislation and the Gendering of Jobs in the North of England 1830-1860' (1993), is also an important contribution to the early history of protective legislation for women in the woollen and cotton industries, ('30) and an addition to the canon of literature on women's work in industrialised settings.

Rosemary Feurer's article 'Meaning of Sisterhood: the British women's movement and protective labor legislation' (1988) and Kali Israel's thesis 'Drawn From Life: art, work and feminism in the life of Lady Emilia Dilke 1840-1904' (1992) have analysed the changes of direction and policy in British women's trade unionism in the late nineteenth century. ('31) Israel's study shows that Dilke personified the dilemmas faced by feminists in the debate over protective legislation. Like many of her 'sisters', she came to the view that women's working conditions could only be improved via legislation, something she and others could not have countenanced until the middle to late 1880s. Once in place as President of the Women's Protective and Provident League in 1886, following the death of its founder Emma Paterson, she and the League (which changed its name to Women's Trade Union League in 1891) increasingly took on the mantle of social feminism. Ten years earlier the women's trade union movement had been implacably opposed to protective legislation for women. A decade of campaigning, and increased knowledge of women's experiences in the workplace resulted in a complete reappraisal of their policy on legislating on women's wage earning activities. ('32)
In the course of undertaking the research for this thesis there has been a noticeable increase in the literature concerning the role of women and their presence in the labour force and the way in which it became a political issue and a social problem. However, it is noticeable that an overwhelming proportion of the literature has focused on the presence and politicisation of women in the 'male' sphere of the factory and in 'male' occupations in places such as coal mines. The thesis aims to make up for the lack of attention by feminist and labour historians to the fact that a large proportion of the female population remained home-bound. A great many of the arguments of socialists and others were concerned with the consequences of the development of factories and the proletarianisation of labour creating the basis of a social revolution. Work in the home was merely seen as a vestige of the vanishing pre-industrial past. The importance of homework to Britain's industrialised economy has in consequence been ignored. Women's presence in industrialised workplaces was deplored, their role in the home was sanctified, but their involvement in the economy as homeworkers was not seen as part of economic life.

This thesis endeavours to fill this gap by providing an account of a campaign by individuals, politicians and organisations to regulate homework out of existence; how government responded to homework; and how policy makers came to identify the issue. The thesis draws on sources which have not been examined from the point of view of homework. These include The British Medical Journal and The Lancet; Hansard's Parliamentary Debates; contemporary national and local newspapers and journals; reports of the women's trade union movement and the Women's Industrial Council; the annual reports of the Medical Officer of Health for Spitalfields; Census Returns; memoirs and
Cabinet papers. This study shares the belief of Thane, Harris, et al., in the importance of using an historical approach to analyse social policy problems. Fee and Fox have observed on this point:

For more than a generation, men and women who rely primarily on historical methods have been losing influence as educators and advisors to public officials. Practitioners of historical methods once dominated the social sciences. Historical inquiry was also essential for the study of epidemiology and public health. In recent decades, however, historical methods have become subordinate to experimentalism and model building in university curricula for the social sciences and public health and in the priorities of most of the organisations that sponsor research in the hope of ameliorating social problems... Historians increasingly have been writing for other historians, with little hope that they can help inform or shape the directions of public policy. (33)

In writing this thesis the author has been greatly influenced by such arguments. As we shall see, homeworkers were caught in the cross-fire of a heated and long-running debate on the propriety of the use of the home as a workplace; its 'desecration' by the manufacturing process; its violation by the entry of government inspectors and its impact on the privacy and freedom of the individual. Those who would like to improve conditions for homeworkers, and especially those who are trying to monitor 'teleworkers', encounter similar attitudes in the 1990s. (34)

Spitalfields was chosen as a case study because: there is a wealth of primary material about this district which was one of the poorest, the most unhealthy and most overcrowded in London; social science researchers who have been interested in the East End of London for a hundred years have produced much useful material on the area and the people; and it has a long history as a working neighbourhood and as a place where homework has been carried on. The year 1880 was chosen as the starting point so that material from the 1881 Census could be used to introduce the study and provide the data, albeit elementary.
on homeworkers. Information on one thousand six hundred homeworkers in Spitalfields was trawled and provides a microcosm of a national urban problem. The sample yielded valuable information about the kind of women who did homework in 1881 (or at least those who admitted doing it); their domestic circumstances and the work they did, which ranged from artificial flower-making to willow basket-weaving.

It is important to make clear from the outset that this thesis is not about homeworkers so much as it is concerned with the politicisation of their conditions by campaigners such as Charles Booth, Clementina Black, George Cadbury and The Lancet. Together they initiated and sustained the debate on the issue and organised a highly effective campaign. There was a remarkable continuity about the chief protagonists in this campaign - a number witnessed the Trade Boards Act bring a legislative conclusion to the issue. Lord Dunraven and Clementina Black were involved from the outset and others including Charles Booth tempered their views. New blood, like George Cadbury and Mary MacArthur injected their attitudes and energy and influence into the debate of the solutions for dealing with 'the homework problem', and were instrumental in bringing about the 1909 Act. Further, so deeply ingrained in middle-class consciousness was the phrase 'Home Sweet Home' (coined by J.H. Payne in 1823) and the image of women portrayed in Coventry Patmore's poem The Angel in the House (1854-1862) that the debate on homework can be evidenced as an example of what we may describe as the politicisation of private space. Victorian middle-class evangelists had invested the concept of the two spheres, the public and the private, with powerful meanings and feelings, and two and three generations later the idea of 'The Home' was held up to intense scrutiny in the face of the
twin onslaught of an invasion by homework which defiled its sanctity, and the threat of factory inspectors defiling its purity by enforcing new legislation to monitor this economic activity. The subsequent vehicles of public health concern, the Motherhood, Race and Empire argument, and the anti-sweating campaign were necessary adjuncts to the central issue at stake, the battle to define what the home was, a Victorian icon, and what it was not - an economic zone.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Although the structure of the thesis is chronological, each period may be characterised by different developments in the politics of homework. Using female homeworkers in Spitalfields in 1881 as a case study, Chapter One analyses the politics of homework in the 1880s. The causes of women's poverty and their treatment at the hands of the Poor Law provide a back-drop to the public health scares which fuelled the demand for the abolition of homework. Chapter Two looks at the processes involved in the identification of homework as a problem during the 1890s. Existing factory and workshop legislation meant that homeworkers were completely unregulated; to amend it by intruding into the private sphere of the home was thought to be politically damaging and administratively expensive. Another vehicle was required to increase the public's and the politicians' awareness of the situation. The Motherhood, Race and Empire argument was constructed in this period and it became a weapon in the abolitionists' armoury. We show how the Women's Industrial Council provided the core of information on London's homeworkers, arranged
conferences and subsequently drafted the first of many bills which attempted to deal with the homework problem. The Women's Industrial Council took the initiative and began to make friends in Parliament and lobbied for the improvement of the home if it were to be used as a workplace, and to study the possibilities of a minimum wage for the most sweated workers. In addition to this development the 1890s were to see the formation of a network of influential elites around the homeworking issue. Chapter Three describes the identification of homework as a 'dangerous trade' polluting the home, the mother and her offspring. Chapter Four reviews a different approach to solve the homework problem. The three years covered by this chapter, 1905-1908, witness the homework problem established on the political agenda and broad agreement about the need for legislation. The Quaker chocolate manufacturer, George Cadbury, and his campaigning anti-sweating newspaper *The Daily News* and the activities of the Anti-Sweating League, were crucial to the raising of homework's profile, as was the fact that the young Winston Churchill took up the issue and steered the first piece of minimum wage legislation (for four of the worst paid trades), all of which had a large homework element, through Parliament. The Liberal protagonists of social welfare initiatives declined, for ideological and economic reasons, to succumb to the abolitionists' demands. Important work was done by women's organisations and women trade unionists who pressured their Parliamentary friends to promote and vote for the minimum wage legislation which they themselves had originally drafted. Chapter Five describes the Trade Boards Act of 1909 and the factors which made it possible for the Government to legislate at that moment. After 1909 no legislative or social policy change with regards to
homework takes place for sixty years. During the thirty years under review there was a consensus on homework which has persisted.

The period covered in this thesis has attracted considerable interest from students of women's suffrage. The starting point of this study was an examination of the militant Edwardian campaign for votes for women. At this time, a homework campaign was fought which, although not as visible or as public as that for women's suffrage, touched on fundamental women's rights in the economic sphere. The Edwardian years witnessed two parallel campaigns to define women's lives, both politically and economically. Homeworkers were targeted by campaigners who sought to protect the private sphere of 'The Home' from their economic activities, and the House of Commons was the focus of another struggle to claim a means of improving women's lives through politics. While women's political rights undoubtedly improved with the enfranchisement of women in 1918, the battle for equal economic opportunities was much less successful. The avowed wish to interfere with women's economic freedom by preventing them from doing homework was a significant episode in the emergence of a long-running campaign to win greater economic equality for women. Homework continues today and contemporary comment reveals many of the same ambiguities and tensions which were articulated more than eighty years ago. The tensions and alleged conflicts between women, work and the home have not been resolved. The politics of homework in the late twentieth century is thus resonant with the controversies in Edwardian Britain.
CHAPTER 1

THE POLITICS OF HOMEWORK IN THE 1880s

This chapter describes and analyses the politics of women's homework in Spitalfields, East London in the 1880s. The development of this form of women's work, the causes of poverty and their treatment at the hands of the Poor Law provide the backdrop to the public health scares of the decade, which were fuelled by discovery and condemnation by The Lancet. Individuals and groups supporting The Lancet's cause demanded homework's abolition, armed with evidence submitted to the 1890 House of Lords Report on the Sweating System. This chapter examines the extent of homeworking in Spitalfields, and discusses the processes by which the women and their work were described, and the identification of the 'problem'. (See Appendix A which contains a brief history of the Spitalfields area.)

LONDON'S LABOUR MARKET

In the spring of 1881 Hannah Langner, a Polish Jewess, aged 46 was living at 50 Grey Eagle Street, Spitalfields. She and her husband worked in their home as boot-finishers. They came from Valayne in Poland where their six children were born. Their daughters Polly (23 years old), Leah (21), Milly (18) and Flora (15) were tailoresses. A 20 year old son worked as a boot-riveter and the youngest son, aged
12 was still at school. The Langner family shared a small terraced house with two other families, one also Polish Jewish. Fifteen people lived in this house.

Further down Grey Eagle Street, at number 24, lived Annie Waters, aged 15. She worked at home as a maker of paper boxes. Her father, born in Lambeth, was casually employed as a porter, perhaps at Spitalfields market. Her mother looked after three younger children, aged eleven, ten and two. Annie had been born in Paddington, but had lived in Spitalfields for the previous eleven years. The Waters family shared this house with a lodger.

Hannah and Annie were Spitalfields' homeworkers. Their street, according to Dr Liddle (the Medical Officer of Health for Spitalfields) should have been demolished as the area was in 'an unhealthy condition', populated by over a thousand people with a mortality rate of 33.3 per thousand, well above the national and London average.

In 1881 more than thirty Jewish women, mostly from Russia and Poland, some from Austria and Germany, may have worked at home as tailoresses in this street. (By this date Spitalfields and Whitechapel were the heart of East London's ready-made clothing industry). Nearly as many of the other Jewish women who lived in this street did other kinds of homework: boot and shoe-making; buttonhole-making; furriery; tassel-making; stay-making; envelope-folding and paper-box-making.

Most of their female non-Jewish neighbours were also homeworkers: washerwomen; manglers; needlewomen; dressmakers; stay-makers; a chair-caner; envelope-folders and a hat-box-maker. There were several potential sources of homework locally: Walter Pears, a paper-box manufacturer in Wheeler Street; Samuel Goldstein, John Levy and
Lewis Zacchariah, boot manufacturers in Hope Street, Wood Street and Wilkes Street respectively; Brick Lane had three piece-brokers (middlemen and contractors in the ready-made clothing industry) as well as other suppliers beyond the immediate vicinity and in the City of London.

On Monday April 4th 1881 the Census for England and Wales was taken. Census enumerators recorded the name, age, place of birth and occupation of every person they found at every address at which they called. Detailed analysis of the Registrar General's Report of the District of Whitechapel, sub-division Spitalfields, reveals a picture of the incidence of homework done by the women of this impoverished slum. The twenty-one districts of Spitalfields comprised forty streets, courts, alleys and passages, a population of 18,523. 8,614 were female, of whom 1,662 earned their living by doing homework, approximately one in every five. (See Appendices B and C)

### TABLE 1: HOMEWORK IN SPITALFIELDS, 1881

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number of Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Garment-making</td>
<td>964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>milliner</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>needlewoman</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seamstress</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stay-maker</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cap-maker</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dressmaker</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hatter</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>button-holer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shirt-maker</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>machinist</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tailor’s machinist</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trimmings-maker</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trouser-maker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waist-coat-maker</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>silk-jacket-maker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>costume-finisher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collar-maker</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collar-machinist</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
tie-maker 2
trimmer 5
embroiderer 1
presser 1

Washing, Ironing and Mangling 191

Cigar-making 143

'Sweated' trades: 93
artificial flower-maker 4
brush-maker 7
feather-dresser and curler 7
matchbox-maker 8
umbrella and parasol-maker 35
toy-maker 3
basket-maker 7
sack-maker 10
tassel-maker 4
bag-maker 2
match-maker 3
willow-weaver 1
walking stick-maker 1
mattress case-maker 1

Boxes and Stationery: 67
book-gilder 2
book-folder 5
paper-bag-maker 2
paper-box-maker 46
envelope-folder 8
Valentine card-maker 1
drawing-paper colourer 1
packing case-maker 1

Boots, Shoes and Slippers: 65
boot-sewer 3
boot-riveter 1
boot-closer 5
boot-machinist 8
boot-binder 8
boot-maker 25
boot-finisher 7
slipper-maker 6
apprentice boot worker and shoe binder 1

Silk Weaving: 59
silk-winder 27
silk-weaver 28
cotton and worsted winder 3
silk-jacket weaver 1

Furriery: 46
fur skin-dresser 2
fur sewer 17
furriers 21
fur cap-maker 2
shape-wirer 2
fur hands 3

- 30 -
Furniture: 12
chair-caner 4
upholstery 5
chair-maker 1
horse-hair-curler 1
cabinet-maker 1

Number of houses where homework was done 787

Victorian London was the largest city in the world. During the nineteenth century London's population grew at a great rate: in 1801 Greater London numbered 1,117,000; in 1851, 2,685,000 and in 1901, 6,580,000. Between 1871 and 1901 its population rose faster than any provincial conurbations and far faster than the nation as a whole. It was the major British port, generating and processing a huge volume of trade. Raw materials came into the country at the Port of London and manufactured goods made throughout the country were exported from London. Small scale industrialisation helped develop the character of London as a working capital city. The coal and iron ore deposits were too far away to make steam-driven machinery and large-scale factory production, on the scale of the north of England, viable. The high cost of fuel, rents and rates meant that the construction, staffing and maintenance of large factories was often too expensive. These factors ensured that London was a city of small workshops and retained a pre-industrial character and atmosphere.

By the 1870s major sources of male employment in London were the making of clothing and footwear, furniture, metal work, engineering, printing and the making of precision instruments and watch and clock making. The clothing, boot and shoe and furniture-making industries were mechanised and the manufacturing processes were heavily subdivided and de-skilled and completed in small workshops. A booming domestic and colonial market provided work for hundreds of thousands of skilled and semi-skilled and unskilled workers. Sewing machines,
and the introduction of the bandsaw, speeded up the production of ready-made clothing to keep pace with the growing demands of the Victorian consumer. The sub-division and de-skilling of labour was the major feature of manufacturing in London at this time. The ready-made clothing industry dates from the 1860s with the invention and mass-production of sewing machines which could be bought in instalments or hired at rates of 1/6d to 2/6d per week. Thousands of small garment-making workshops functioned in all parts of the capital - it cost little to set up as a small master. A vast pool of cheap labour, female and immigrant, especially in the East End, made possible the explosion of the clothing industry by the 1880s. Small workshops - 'sweat shops', characterised by long hours, low pay and unhealthy conditions, proliferated. The low cost of production enabled entrepreneurs to hire low paid workers in the spring and autumn, the busy seasons of the year. Once the season became 'slack' only the most skilled workers, the cutters and pressers, usually men, were retained. The rest of the workforce found themselves out of work. The worst features of sweatshop production - low pay, long hours and bad insanitary conditions - were taken to the workers' own homes. Homeworkers subsidised their employers' costs by providing their own workplace, heat, light, thread and sewing machine. Further, rather than cleaning up their own workplaces as demanded by a growing body of factory legislation, many employers put more work out to homeworkers.

The leather and heavy engineering trades experienced competition from the provinces. A price war was waged between London and Leicester, Nottingham and Manchester, and the capital was losing. Lower costs and extensive factorisation elsewhere made London goods more expensive. From the 1870s a number of traditional London
industries such as boot and shoe-making, felt-hatting and match-making moved to the provinces. Often the workforce had to face the choice of going without work or accept the lowest rates of pay and deteriorating conditions."

The East End was London's most heavily industrialised area. Work available there was mostly semi-skilled and unskilled, seasonal and erratic in supply. The casual nature of much of the work that was on offer ensured that the workers were often unemployed, under-employed and always poor. The women who earned their living as homeworkers were frequently the wives and daughters of casual labourers, who suffered the greatest vicissitudes of the Victorian labour market. Casual labourers' employment patterns, unpredictable earnings and poor job security meant that their womenfolk had to help with the family budget. Need rather than greed for 'pin-money', an accusation often levelled against them, necessitated them going out to work, or taking in homework."

The women who did homework in Spitalfields did it because they had to, and were upholding the prevailing domestic ideology that 'A Woman's Place Is In The Home'.

Spitalfields' homeworkers' menfolk were variously employed in the garment-making industry, mostly as tailors, machinists and cap-makers; boot, shoe and slipper-makers; furriery; cigar-making; furniture-making; purveyors of food and drink; were labourers at the docks and on building sites and market porters. There were: carpenters; blacksmiths; paper-hangers; builders; glaziers; warehousemen; rag-packers; tinkers; hawkers; messengers; a clock-maker and chimney-sweep. (See Appendix D)

Women's employment opportunities in Spitalfields were finite, varied, seasonal and casual. London offered no single staple employment for women comparable to that in the northern textile
Many were employed in the 'slop' (cheaply, badly made and sweated) and 'honourable' (non-sweated) trades. The success of the former depended on sub-division of the manufacturing processes and availability of cheap labour which was almost exclusively female. Wages were kept low and could drop further if wholesalers felt that their profit margins were being squeezed by competition. Men in the 'honourable' trades (like tailors) worried at the growth of homework, and were especially concerned that their skills and wages were being undermined by an influx of women into the labour market.¹⁴

Not all the work done by women in Victorian London was of the slop, unskilled variety. There was a hierarchy within the women's labour market. While most women's work was of the worst paid kind, because few of their skills had scarcity value or socially recognised status, skilled work was only available in the exclusively female trades such as dressmaking and millinery, some factory work and in certain sections in men's 'honourable' trades. This work required some training, and it could be reasonably well paid in comparison with most kinds of women's work, and was often more secure.¹⁵ In 1881 numbers of Spitalfields women worked in exclusively female jobs such as dressmaking and millinery, and in men's trades such as shoe-making, hat-making and tailoring. Apprenticeships were available for those who could afford them, but low pay, overwork and poor health were endemic even among skilled female workers.¹⁶ Thomas Hood's Song of the Shirt (1843) described their plight:

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread -
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch
She sang the 'Song of the Shirt'.

- 34 -
Work-work-work!
My labour never flags;
And what are its wages? A bed of straw,
A crust of bread - and rags.
That shatter'd roof - and this naked floor -
A table - a broken chair -
And a wall so blank, my shadow I thank
For sometimes falling there!

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat in unwomanly rags
Flying her needle and thread -
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch,
Would that its tone could reach the rich!
She sang this 'Song of the Shirt'.

It was frequently said that milliners and dressmakers resorted to casual prostitution when work was scarce and wages were at their lowest.

Gareth Steedman-Jones described the problems of seasonality, unemployment and under-employment. In Outcast London, he argues that although the workforce 'dovetailed' their occupations with skill, seasonality still caused poverty. His analysis of unemployment in the 1880s shows that the slack season could cause 60% unemployment among milliners and brushmakers, 80-90% amongst book-binders, saddlers, hatters and shirt-makers, and 35% amongst brick-layers and general labourers. Workers in the 'dishonourable' or sweated trades suffered the most. In the 1850s Henry Mayhew found that weather was an important barometer of employment and poverty. Steedman-Jones maintains that the worst period of distress in the nineteenth century related more to bad winters than to cyclical trade depressions. Thousands of semi- and unskilled men were thrown out of work during the winters of 1879, 1886 and 1887-91. Women from such families had to find any work that was available and many would have taken in homework.
In 1883 the anonymous penny pamphlet 'The Bitter Cry of Outcast London' told a vivid tale of the poorest of London's poor. Probably written by the Reverend Andrew Mearns, the Secretary of the London Congregational Union, it was the single most influential piece of writing on the poor and their living conditions, and was the catalyst for several attempts to describe poverty. It was not the first study of London's slums but, helped by the publicity given to it by the influential newspaper The Pall Mall Gazette, it touched the conscience of everyone, including the Queen and the Prince of Wales.

This pamphlet was responsible for a Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes which reported during 1884/5. 'The Bitter Cry' drew attention to the dangers of homework. It was an early example of the identification of homework as a social problem and set in train a series of investigations into women producing clothing and goods in their own homes. The author described the homes he had visited:

In many cases matters are made worse by the unhealthy occupations followed by those who dwell in these habitations. Here you are choked as you enter the air laden with particles of the superfluous fur pulled from the skins of rabbits, dogs and other animals in their preparations for the furrier. Here the smell of paste and of drying matchboxes hung with other sickly odours overpowers you... We ask a young woman who is making tweed trousers how much she can earn in a day and we are told one shilling. But what does a day mean to this poor soul? Seventeen hours! From five in the morning to ten at night - no pause for meals. She eats on her own and drinks a little tea as she works, making in very truth, with her needle and thread, not only her living but her shroud, for making men's shirts these women are paid ten pence a dozen.
Set in the context of the discoveries of bad housing and chronic overcrowding, homework was identified as work which was harmful to the worker and a public health menace. 'The Bitter Cry' suggested a strong link between bad housing, poverty and prostitution.

The journalist George Sims added to the literature on the lives of the poor. In 1883 he went into 'Povertyopolis', his name for the most wretched districts in London, and gave examples of the delays in burying the dead among the poorest people in Spitalfields. One family of homeworkers posed a threat to the public's health:

Mr Wrack [an Inspector working under the direction of the Medical Officer of Health for Whitechapel] reports that on visiting 28 Church Street on 5th December last (1882) he found on the second floor of the front room the dead body of a child... who had died of scarlet fever on the first of the month. The room was occupied as a living and sleeping room by five persons, viz, father and mother, their child, a girl about three years and two adults, the grandfather and grandmother of the child who were engaged at tailor's work... The smell on entering the room was most sickening. Upon remonstrating with the people for keeping the body so long unburied, and especially for not having it coffined, they replied that they were waiting to raise the means for burying it; and being Irish said that it was not their custom to coffin the dead until the day of the funeral. The body was not buried until the 9th of December and then it had to be buried by the parish authorities. (24)

Later in the decade Sims returned to this theme with the re-issue of an 1881 article called 'Horrible London', attacking the 'objectionable trades' which were carried out by the abject poor. (25) He ends with an impassioned plea for better citizenship from his readers:

Public opinion boldly expressed never fails to compel the obedience of those who guide the destinies of states. Public opinion is a consequence of voices and the strength of that chorus depends upon the manner in which each individual member of it exerts his vocal power. How long the scandal which disgraces the age shall continue depends greatly therefore good readers upon your individual exertions. (26)
On April 4th 1884 the Rector of Spitalfields, Claudius Billing, described his parish and its female homeworkers to the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes. The Rector was also a Poor Law Guardian for the Whitechapel Board of Guardians, and Chairman of the Committee of Management of the local School Board. He linked the dangers of overcrowding, exacerbated, he said, by the recent demolition of the rookeries in the district and the erection of warehousing instead of housing, and the practice of women working in their own homes which were made more squalid by the work: "That is one of the greatest evils of overcrowding, that the people not only live in the rooms and sleep in the rooms, but carry on there very often a trade which is obnoxious to health... the fur cleaners, for example, do all their business in the room in which the family live and sleep. That is one of the worst of the businesses." The sack makers' wages, he asserted, were not enough 'to sustain life'.

In the summer of 1884 the medical journal The Lancet presented the public health risks of work carried out under sweated conditions. Earlier that year it had studied Polish Jewish tailors in Whitechapel, East London, and it was so alarmed by the conditions it found, that it called for the cleaning up of all places where clothing was made, whether in workshops or private dwellings. The consumer had to be protected from the 'perils' of sweated labour in the East End. The danger of contagious diseases such as scarlet fever, measles and tuberculosis being spread throughout the population on infected clothing from sweaters' 'dens' was repeatedly underlined. Now the subject of homework and public health was on the political agenda and remained there.

By the end of 1887 the situation had not improved, and The Lancet spelt out its view more stridently:
The subject is urgently pressing and the public must bestir themselves to terminate an "evil" that has been intolerable... For those whom no other considerations will move, they may well think of the risk of infections to which they are exposed by wearing clothes which are made under conditions which are absolutely incompatible with health; it is the daily experience of London health officers to find fever and smallpox prevails in the rooms in which the tailor works and more can tell how many of the unexplained cases of contagion may be due to these overcrowded and unhealthy tenements... It is surely time that some strenuous attempt was made to terminate circumstances that are a disgrace to civilisation. (31)

THE HOME, HOMEWORK & THE FACTORY & WORKSHOP ACT OF 1878

The home was exempted from the 1878 Factory and Workshop Act. Further, the concept of the sanctity of the home as a non-economic space was reinforced in this legislation which restricted the right of entry of inspectors into private dwellings. Since the Industrial Revolution a separation between the private and the public spheres had taken place. The home was the world of women, and the public sphere - the world of work - belonged to men, thus depriving women of their opportunity of traditional wage-earning activities. Protestant evangelicalism was a major influence in the formation of this domestic ideology. Concerned about declining church attendance and the impact of Darwinism, its conservative moral views created a creed which underpinned the separation of the spheres. Coventry Patmore's poem The Angel in the House (1854-1862) provided the literary model of homes where wives or 'angels' nurtured husbands and children in a holy space. Working-class women were expected to espouse and uphold these bourgeois concepts. Homework, thought initially to be a quaint fossil from a pre-industrial era, challenged this code and undermined the view that 'An Englishman's Home is His Castle' by necessitating the entry of a foreign 'army' of outsiders - factory inspectors, an
enemy which threatened to attack the inner sanctum of 'The Home' to monitor and inspect wage-earning activities.\(^{(32)}\)

The relevant clauses, Section 61 and Section 69, clarify these points and help explain why homeworkers continued to be immune from regulation and inspection at a time when factories and workshops were being cleaned up. Section 61 listed the provisions of the 1878 Act which did not apply to workplaces:

Where persons are employed at home, that is to say a private house, room or place which, though used as a dwelling, is by any reason of the work carried on there, a factory or workshop within the meaning of the Act and in which neither steam, water, nor any mechanical power is used and in which the only persons employed are members of the same family dwelling there.

Thus homeworkers were exempted from provisions which related to, firstly 'cleanliness and the freedom from effluvia or to overcrowding or ventilation'; secondly, 'all children, young persons and women having the times allowed for meals at the same hour of the day or during any part of the times allowed for meals'; thirdly, 'the fixing of any notice or abstract about hours and rates of pay'; fourthly, 'to the allowance of any holidays of a child, young person or woman'; and fifthly, 'to the sending of notice of accidents shall not apply'.\(^{(33)}\) Section 69 embodied the concept of the sanctity of the home and ensured that homeworkers would remain unregulated, unseen and 'unwholesome'. The clause read:

An inspector before entering in pursuance of the powers conferred by this Act without the consent of the occupiers of any room or a place actually used as a dwelling as well as for a factory or workshop, shall on an affidavit or statutory declaration of facts and reasons obtain written authority to do so from the Secretary of State or such warrant as is hereinafter mentioned from a Justice of the Peace... who if satisfied by information on oath that there is reasonable cause to suppose that any encroachment of this Act is contravened in any such room or place as aforesaid may in his discretion grant a warrant under his hand authorising or named herein at any time within the period therein but not exceeding one month from the date thereof, to enter in pursuance of this Act the room or place named in
the warrant and exercise therein the powers of inspection and examination conferred by this Act and the fines and provisions of the Act with respect to obstruction of an inspector shall apply accordingly. (34)

The lack of political will to invade the privacy of even the poorest citizen's home, despite the growing body of alarming evidence about an allegedly lethal workforce, ensured that homeworkers remained immune from contemporary efforts to clean up workplaces. Undoubtedly, the high cost of appointing inspectors and clerical support to enforce any such legislation was another factor which kept them out of sight and badly paid. B.L. Hutchins, a feminist and an authority on factory legislation, believed that as far as homeworkers were concerned the 1878 Act was a 'distinct retrogression from the comprehensive control recommended by the Commission of 1866 and aimed at by the Workshops Act of 1867.' (35)

WOMEN, WORK AND POVERTY

Industrialisation acted as a centrifugal (36) force on the clothing industry, which was conducted in factories, workshops and in people's own homes. From the mid-nineteenth century factory workers and homeworkers coexisted in clothing and other industries: a sewing machine turned a private dwelling into a unit of production, an outer unit circling the industrial centre. Homeworkers received work from contractors, warehouses and a network of middlemen and women and sub-contractors. The sub-division of labour and the consequent de-skilling of the work made available a range of work for females and juveniles who were the homework labour force. Technical improvements did not displace homeworkers: in fact sewing machines increased the amount of work which was done at home. (37) The ease with which work
could be put out to homeworkers, and the strength of 'laissez-faire' economics and Free Trade, meant that homework came to be an integral feature of many industries. The Victorian 'mania' for cheap clothing, and fluctuating demand for millinery and footwear according to the weather, the fashion season and changing tastes, were supplied by the extensive use of homeworkers, the cheapest and most flexible workforce. Employers who used them saved on rent, heat, light, hire of machines and thread, and were in no danger of falling foul of factory and workshop legislation which increasingly regulated the hours worked, limited overtime, restricted the use of child labour and insisted on better standards of cleanliness and sanitation.

In *Capital*, first available in English in 1887, Karl Marx analysed the theory and practice of homework. He wrote:

In the outside department of the factory... and the warehouse, the so-called domestic workers whose employment is at best irregular, are entirely dependent for their raw materials and orders on the caprice of the capitalist who, in this industry, is not hampered by any regard for the depreciation of his buildings and risks nothing by a stoppage of work, but the skin of the worker himself. He sets himself mechanically to work to form an industrial reserve force that shall be ready at a moment's notice; during one part of the year he decimates this force by the most inhuman toil, during the other part he lets it starve for the want of work.

The sanctity of the home was an argument, Marx believed, which effectively liberated homeworkers and their employers from interference threatened by factory legislation:

So long as Factory Legislation is confined to regulating the labour force in factories... it is regarded as a mere interference with the exploiting rights of capital. But when it comes to regulating the so called 'home labour' it is immediately viewed as a direct attack on the patria potestas [native power which belongs to a country] and... the tender-hearted English Parliament long affected to shrink from taking this step. The force of facts however compelled it at last to acknowledge that modern industry in overturning the economic foundation on which it was based, the traditional family and family labour corresponding to it, had also unloosened all traditional family ties.
Reviewing the impact of factory legislation on domestic industries and homeworkers, Marx underlined the resulting paradoxical situation:

By the destruction of petty and domestic industries it [factory legislation] destroys the last resort of the 'redundant population', and with it the sole remaining safety valve of the whole social mechanism. By maturing the material conditions and the combination on a social scale of the processes of production it matures the contradictions and antagonisms of the capitalist forms of production and thereby provides, along with the elements for the formation of a new society, the forces for exploiting the old one. (41)

Capitalism, he argued, needed a huge reserve of casual labour which could be mobilised quickly to supply the exigencies of economic conditions. (42) Women fulfilled this role as factory and workshop workers, but especially as homeworkers. It was not just a quaint fossil from pre-industrial days or an historical aberration, but a means for impoverished working-class families to earn a living. (43)

The success of capitalism in taking away work from the home produced, as Marx showed, a contradictory need in that while there was a demand for female labour, there were still the problems of child-care and domestic responsibilities. Women had to take on the double burdens of waged labour and nurturing a family. Homework enabled them to cope with male unemployment and under-employment, child-care and domestic responsibilities. (44)

Given the influential position of the Victorian ideal of 'the home', homework was the only form of waged labour whereby they could earn a wage and abide by the prevailing view that a woman's place was in the home. (45) In recent years, feminist historians have asked whether a loss of confidence had taken place which prompted women not to venture into the public world of the factory and workshop, but to choose lower paid homework instead. Sandra Taylor, for example, postulates a theory of self-preservation: 'In a period when married
working women were regarded with such disrespect that she preferred work in the traditional domestic sphere - a sphere extremely poorly paid... married women were pressured by both social sanction and contemporary opinion into various forms of outwork. (Taylor calls 'outwork' what we have defined as homework.)

As well as male unemployment there were other causes of poverty endemic in working-class women's lives which necessitated taking up homework. Longer life expectancy than their men folk meant that many women would be widowed with dependents to support. Women's work opportunities were more limited than men's and their pay was always lower. Also, it was extremely difficult to for a wife to receive any financial assistance from an estranged husband. Countless wives were impoverished by violent and drunken husbands. Illness, poor health and old age put many women into the ranks of the semi-destitute and destitute, so much so that by the end of the nineteenth century, workhouses were housing large numbers of aged, infirm and sick women. (See Appendix E)

Since the 1830s Poor Law policy makers ignored or underestimated the problems of poverty for adult able-bodied women. The regulations of the 1834 Poor Law Reform Act reinforced the notion that women were not wage-earning dependents and yet they comprised the majority of adult recipients of poor relief. The Act's main objective was to withdraw relief from men who were judged capable of work. The policy of deterrence was so thoroughly pursued that few persisted in their attempts. The non able-bodied deserving poor were entitled under very strict guidelines to a small weekly dole of money and could remain living in their own homes, or were admitted to the workhouse. Wives had to follow their husbands into the workhouse. Most women and men too were reluctant to apply for poor relief knowing that it
would only be a pittance at best, and would involve a scrutiny of their circumstances. (51)

Analysing the treatment that various categories of poor women received at the hands of the Poor Law Guardians, Ellen Mappen argues that: 'Although unmarried able-bodied women were not prohibited from receiving out-relief... in practice London Guardians did not grant relief to this class. Married women were still classified according to their husband's physical condition.' Widows were dealt with more sympathetically - those who were unemployed with children were granted outdoor relief if they were 'respectable'. Relief was never granted to mothers of 'bad character and vicious habits'. To keep costs down, after 1871 the Local Government Board insisted that more restrictive guidelines be adopted. The workhouse test was to be applied to all able-bodied persons, men and women alike: previously it had only been applied to men. Outdoor relief could not be given to: single able-bodied women (as it sometimes had been); to deserted wives during the first two months of their desertion; or to able-bodied women with only one child. Widows with more than one child had to send additional children to the workhouse instead of being given outdoor-relief. This tightening-up worked and the numbers given small doles of money declined. Sums were still given to widows but only those with children. (52) Relieving officers were local people who knew the local poor well and were assisted after 1870 by the appointment of more 'cross visitors' to make home visits and pry into paupers' lives to ensure that they did not lie about their personal circumstances. (53) Given these policies it is unlikely that Spitalfields' homeworkers received much outdoor relief. The minutes of the meetings of the local Poor Law Guardians yield no specific information about the small amounts of outdoor relief that were
given. (54) Homeworkers thus suffered the double difficulty of having to do the worst paid work, and when it dried up faced great obstacles from those who might provide small amounts of financial help.

WOMEN'S TRADE UNIONISM AND HOMEWORK IN THE EAST END

Founded in 1875 by Emma Paterson,(55) the Women's Protective and Provident League was the first women's trade union to try to unionise homeworkers in the East End of London. In the earliest years, Paterson's views prevailed and the League utterly opposed any factory and workshop legislation which applied to women only. Her death in 1886 witnessed a new President, Lady Emilia Dilke, a change of name to the Women's Trade Union and Protective League (1889) and a change of policy. (56) Henceforward the League became one of the most vocal and powerful proponents of protective legislation for women workers, demonstrating a recognition that women's working conditions could only be improved by a two-pronged attack: trade union organisation and more protective factory laws.

This fundamental change in the policy of the women's trade union movement, illustrates the highly charged debates of at least two decades surrounding the issues concerning the legislative regulation of women's employment. After the 1860s, a broad coalition of social reformers and feminists were divided between those who thought that the State should offer special protection for women and those who thought that women should have the right to compete freely in an open labour market. (57) From the early nineteenth century various and vigorous attempts were made to control or prohibit women's presence in the workforce. Perhaps the best known example is that of the driving out of women from underground work in the coal mines in 1842.
and attempts to control their work at the surface in the 1880s.Originating in condemnation of child labour, gender-based legislation was rooted in concerns over morality - the indecency and immorality of women performing hard physical work - and fears that such work was damaging the nation's mothers. Parallel to this was an enlargement of the prescription of women's duties in the home.

The debate about the advantages and disadvantages of protective legislation for working women can be viewed as a case study of the history of feminist ideas in Victorian Britain. Early feminists were informed by views framed in classical liberalism, in freedom of contract, self-help and the desire for a labour market open to men and women and were thus opposed to protective legislation for women. In sum there were three positions in the debate, those who supported laissez-faire and opposed any proposals to restrict women's freedom; those who saw restrictions as a progressive and humane response of the State; and the largest group who applauded protective legislation but only where the application was not on the basis of gender.

The critics of protective legislation believed that it spelled out women's political and economic powerlessness. They were dismayed by the fact that much of the debate was articulated by women who would not be affected by the legislation, and said that in the past legislation had in many cases often meant the difference between wages, unemployment and even destitution. The women workers themselves were torn between the need to earn a living with no restriction in their hours, and those who felt they had a right to demand a cleaner and safer workplace and a shorter working day. Feminists who were in favour of protective legislation accepted that the existing sexual division of labour was more or less natural, but saw in such legislation a means of improving the welfare of working
Acting out of self interest, male workers added their voice to the chorus of support, seeing protective legislation as a means of helping to consolidate gender divisions in labour and preserving men's better wages and dominance in the workforce. With the exception of chain-making, male workers rarely tried to exclude women altogether, rather they wanted to ensure women kept to what they had defined as 'women's work'.

The appearance of socialist feminists in the 1880s, and their ascendancy in the various feminist and other organisations in the late 1880s, and, crucially, the conversion of Lady Emilia Dilke, one of the leading players, to their views, wrought radical changes to the late Victorian women's movement, and women's trade union aims and objectives. Lady Dilke would lead the League through its most difficult period until her death in 1904. Although policy changes had been in the background, the death of Emma Paterson witnessed a radical break with the past. Not all League members were happy with the change in direction. Under Dilke the League abandoned several of its key policies and reversed its position on protective legislation for working women. Closely involved with the League since its foundation, Dilke saw pragmatically that a change in direction was a means of enabling working women to speak for themselves.

Starting from a position of outright opposition to any protective labour legislation targeted solely at women, under her leadership the League changed its name twice in a period of three years, becoming the Women's Trade Union League in 1891. From the late 1880s the League revamped its policies, diluted its stand as an all-women's organisation in order to get trade unionists' moral and financial support, and advocated legislation which would improve men's and women's working conditions, in particular women's unhealthy
workplaces, their low wages and long hours. Paterson had fostered links with male trade unionists, and Dilke would consolidate these developments yet further. Other factors were at play in the change in policy. With ten years of campaigning behind them, some League members had had a change of heart and reviewed their feminist and political stance. Crucially, an influx of supporters with quite different views on the ideological elements of feminist opposition to protective legislation joined the League. These new members were socialist feminists and their voice as a dissenting faction started to be heard from 1884 onwards. They rejected the notion of gender as class and were influential in the League in sharpening and framing the debate on protective legislation. There were important practical considerations too. Many League members, not just the socialist feminist group, felt it was futile to fight the facts. Some preferred to work for better factory inspection, especially the appointment of women factory inspectors, and with this endorsement came the tacit support for a broader thrust of protective legislation. Once they were brought face to face with the realities of working women's lives, many League members from the classical liberal tradition of feminism re-examined their organisations' opposition to state interference to curb the worst excesses of fearsome working conditions and sweated labour.

This reversal of policy by the WPPL in the 19th century is illustrative of what is now called the 'equality versus difference' debate within contemporary feminism. Changing attitudes to the concept of 'sisterhood' described in the various debates in feminist theory in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, would have a major impact on the Edwardian debate on homework. It is not surprising that the increasingly restrictive factory legislation of
the latter half of the nineteenth century would cause an increase in
the number of women doing homework.\(^{(71)}\)

The organization of working women in the East End of London was
more difficult and scattered and isolated home-bound homeworkers
presented a special set of problems,\(^{(72)}\) although by 1890 a number of
women's trade unions, or (trade societies) had come and gone. Only a
small core survived the economic depression in the early 1880s.
Following the Match Girls' Strike in 1888 (the League played no part
in the strike though it was in full sympathy with it), 'the whole
trade union movement has been wakening into newer life and women's
unions have attracted more public attention than ever before'.\(^{(73)}\)
Progress was noted amongst some of the newly formed women's trade
unions in London: the Matchmaker's Union, the Cigar Maker's Mutual
Association, and the Shirt and Collar Pressers and Ironers and
General Laundresses. The Chelsea Seamstresses were active and hopes
were high for the unionisation of women in the jam, pickle and sweet
factories of the East End. Those already established like the
Upholsteresses, Bookbinders, Shirt Makers, and Westminster and
Pimlico Tailoresses were further bolstered by the success of the
Match Girls' strike.

The problems in the East End were so numerous that the WPPL only
made sporadic progress among homeworkers up to the 1880s. Life in
Spitalfields was characterised by an overcrowded labour market,
extreme and unremitting poverty and high levels of immigration. As
eyearly as 1875 they had tried to inaugurate societies among female
boot machinists, matchbox makers and garment workers.\(^{(74)}\) In 1876
three meetings of skirt and costume makers were organised by the
League at the Bishopsgate Schoolroom which resulted in the formation
of the Society of London Sewing Machinists. Such workers were
regularly subjected to reduced rates of pay without notice or justification.\(^{(75)}\) The Society of Tailoresses was founded in 1877 with a tiny membership in East London, but the Sewing Machinist's Society collapsed that year: 'after strenuous efforts the continuance of the society appears to be hopeless'.\(^{(76)}\)

References to League activities in the East End are few between 1878 and 1881. The overall picture of women's trade unionism in London is one of painfully slow progress. For example, no new unions were reported in 1878 and those in existence for bookbinders, shirt collar-makers and tailoresses only just survived. The recent trade depression was cited as the main factor in the lull of union activity, and the reduction in membership of those already established meant that some unions were teetering on the brink of collapse. London bookbinders, upholsteresses and tailoresses were unionised in 1879, but in five years the League had brought a total of only 1,300 London women into trade unions and then only a small number were from the East End. The WPPL persevered and organised a meeting in Hoxton, near Shoreditch, where five different trades were represented.\(^{(77)}\) Their monthly magazine, the *Women's Union Journal*, warned women workers about the inherent evils in 'pin-money' and undercutting their poorer sisters: 'The married woman who works at home at a price inadequate for a woman who has to subsist upon her earnings may suffer severely for it in the future when as a widow she may be obliged to become the sole provider for herself and perhaps for a family also.'\(^{(78)}\)

From the early 1880s the League tried to make inroads among garment makers in the East End of London by organising a meeting of the London Tailoresses Union at St Jude's Schoolroom in Spitalfields. Reverend Barnett, who presided, urged women to join so that they
might increase their wages and reduce the burden they and other poor women were placing on the local poor rates. After the meeting twenty-six new members joined the newly formed Whitechapel Tailoresses Union. The presence of Emma Paterson at the meeting indicates the importance which was attached to organising East London garment workers. Several more meetings were held in Whitechapel that year yielding only a tiny increase in membership. Endorsing the notion of the sanctity of the home, the Women's Union Journal of December 1881, warned members of the inherent problems of applying factory legislation to homeworkers: 'It would be impossible and for many reasons undesirable for them [factory inspectors] to follow working women into their own houses to see that the provisions of the Acts were not evaded.'

During 1882 the Whitechapel Tailoresses Society changed its name to the East London Workwomen's Society and admitted any women from any trade instead of tailoresses only: 'It was thought the plan might work best in the locality.' Some speakers at League meetings in the East End displayed ignorance about the subject on which they expressed such strong opinions. Reverend Gardiner had studied local Spitalfields women and yet showed a lack of knowledge of the circumstances of married women's lives. He blamed them for competing unfairly with single women who depended on their wages, revealing his lack of understanding of the causes of male unemployment and under-employment in this part of London which necessitated wives taking up homework.

League meetings in East London could erupt into chaos as disgruntled local tailors objected to attempts at unionising women workers in their trade. A fierce row broke out between the tailoresses and employers who were present at a meeting in the
Zetland Hall, Mansell Street, Aldgate, in April 1884. A week later another meeting at the same venue which tried to increase membership by local Jewish and Gentile tailoresses allowed only women to attend, as employers and male tailors had been the cause of the previous trouble. (32)

Despite the severe winter and trade depression, the League reported an increase in the numbers of the East London Tailoresses in 1885. Male trade unionists were encouraged to take an active part in unionising their own trades to reduce the incentive of employers hiring cheaper female labour:

The danger to the industrial position is a serious one; in many of the trades the competition of the women is seriously felt... so long as women are without trade feeling and a sense of power afforded by trade societies, so long they may be expected to thus assist in dragging down the value of labour and in diminishing the excellence of work, another result which invariably follows the first process. When reductions have once been commenced the temptation to continue them always gains strength especially if the workers are known to be defenceless. (33)

The moral dangers consequent on women's low pay was a frequent theme in the League's publications:

In some two or three trades we have had some success; but in many employments, notably boxmakers and matchmakers, it has been found impossible for the women to put by even the scantiest sum. In the midst of not merely destitution, but of dire starvation, can we wonder if vice and plenty are preferred to virtue dragging down on a miserable existence too often ending in a pauper's grave? (34)

Scant progress was reported in 1887, and following the death of Emma Paterson, Clementina Black was appointed Secretary. It was at this time that the League promoted Black's idea of 'consumer leagues' and 'white lists', whereby consumers were encouraged to only do business with firms who paid 'fair wages', thereby exercising economic clout:

But the single employer cannot permanently raise the rate of wages any more than a single consumer can. It is even very questionable whether any combination of employers could do so [unless] consumers were... with them, but the consumers, when once the necessary information is put before
them, can if they care enough about it, raise the wages of the workers above starvation point.

In theory it was a good idea, but proved impossible to sustain. In 1888 the viability of these ideas was debated in the context of the evidence presented to the Lords Report on the Sweating System in the East End of London. Black and others spoke of the duty, of 'introducing moral principles into commercial dealings.' They proposed to launch an organization as soon as there were sufficient numbers to make it worthwhile. The Women's Union Journal welcomed the recent change in attitude: 'Labour problems of all sorts have received of late a degree of attention which they never have hitherto.' The increase in homework in times of high male unemployment, and the long term consequences were spelled out:

"The more men are thrown out of work the more essential it becomes for women to support their families and the more eager becomes the competition among them, resulting in a despairing readiness to accept any work at any price and a consequent lowering of payment until in many branches women are working... at home and in factories [and workshops] at the rate of a penny an hour and even this is not the lowest rate... at best they are useless members of the community and themselves unhappy, at worst they become individuals, vicious and drunken and as a class a danger as well as an expense to the whole nation."

The League described their work in the East End:

"The difficulties of organizing in an ill-paid and scattered trade are very great... and there [is]... no strong outside feeling to help in bringing home the need of such efforts, and the numbers... have always remained discouragingly small. Perhaps now when the real state of the East End tailoring trade has been realised by the public the true importance of combination may come to be generally perceived.

Membership of the Leagues's London unions had not grown significantly, with only a slow growth among bookbinders, and a big drop in upholsteresses: 'The size of London, and the difficulty for working
women coming from afar after working hours, is no doubt one cause of this."

In the autumn of 1888 Beatrice Potter attacked homework, declaring it was: 'the very citadel of the evils of sweating.' Encouraged by her parent's friend Herbert Spencer, she took up social investigation, starting as a rent-collector in a model housing scheme near the Tower of London. During her collaboration with her cousin's husband, Charles Booth, on his poverty survey into the Life and Labour of the People of London, she had spent time in the East End investigating the 'slop' clothing trade and had found that a third of it was 'carried on in the living-rooms of the workers... in the same rooms in which she [the homeworker] and her family live, eat and sleep... Homework is at once the cause and the most acute manifestation of the industrial disease which is popularly known as the sweating system.' She accused homeworkers of demoralising the labour market because their numbers were unlimited, and they were not, she insisted, proper breadwinners:

Women who can take the work home are simply unlimited and in time of industrial depression drawn from the middle or lower stratum of society. There is no hardship working for three farthings an hour if you can pick up and lay down your work in the intervals of domestic duties or in the spare moments snatched from gossip with neighbours; and providing always that the little sum earned at the end of the week be so much pocket money. This is not fair competition and it is the hopeless and helpless struggle of men and women straining every nerve to secure a large subsistence, with women who are occupying in an agreeable manner their leisure hours.

She accused those who used homeworkers of increasing the irregularity of employment and she believed that homework destroyed any chance of trade unionism amongst its workers:

The workers are a mass of isolated individuals and like the proverbial bundle of sticks they are taken away one by one and their resistance is easily broken. Thus in homework we not only discover the original cause and the most intensified example of sweating, but it actually increases
day by day, year by year, those very conditions of the labour market which will, under all proposed remedies, whether legislative or otherwise, be absolutely ineffective.

The only solution was prohibition, although it was 'fraught with difficulty and with danger'. She felt that 'in the face of the grave evil of an unrestricted competition of foreign and women workers with our English breadwinners I am absolutely inclined to advocate a thoroughgoing attempt at reform'. Women and Jewish immigrants were identified as the gravest threat to the stability of the workforce and blamed for the perpetuation of sweated labour.

The League was still trying to unionise East End matchbox-makers and workers in the clothing trade in the late 1880s but with little success. Matchbox-makers could only earn a maximum of a shilling a day by making 5½ gross (792) boxes, providing their own brushes and glue. Some 'insights' into homeworkers' homes were offered in the January 1890 issue of the WUJ: 'The whole of their surroundings make it impossible for them to improve their conditions; and their miserable houses... badly ventilated and drained which destroy what little health they have... they become indifferent and hopeless.' Antagonism between factory and workshop workers and homeworkers was cited as another difficulty of unionising them, and women's personalities were allegedly another factor: 'Women are naturally conservative and do not readily accept the principle of unionism.' Many had experienced hardship when their husbands had been on strike or were affected by local strikes: 'unskilled labour will always be the great difficulty to be met with by any combination... the cold and fireless homes will always be the greatest bar to any effort to persuade women to stand together for better remuneration.'

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In 1890 the First Annual Report of the Women's Trade Union Association, an organisation founded 'To improve the condition of working women especially in the East End of London' was published. Launched in October 1889, its intention was to adopt a conciliatory stance on employer/employee relations and establish self-managed and self-supporting trade unions. It was a no-strike organisation, conciliation and arbitration were its vocabulary. A branch was opened at 128 Mile End Road. Clementina Black, the new President, had been the Secretary of the WPPL and was an active Fabian who had felt a sense of frustration with the League:

Is it any wonder that those [homeworkers] who live thus take to drink? Is it any wonder they become coarse and brutal? For my part I am continually amazed not at the failings but at the virtues of the very poor among the workers. Many of them do make a decent livelihood; on the other hand a certain number of them do not and while they remain uncombined, cannot. Of those it is the women who necessarily suffer most and their sufferings undoubtedly tend to weaken the next generation.

Her experience led her to believe that 'the time was particularly favourable for some effort to improve the conditions among working women, especially in the East End'. Their funds were to be put to propaganda work, making temporary allowances to any women who had lost their jobs because they joined the Women's Trade Union Association (WTUA), and funding efforts to promote factory legislation to protect working women. Leading trade unionists, John Burns, Ben Tillett and Henry Champion, were present at the first meeting. At this stage Burns was firmly committed to women's trade unionism. Strenuous efforts were made by the WTUA to organise East End women in the confectionery, mantle-making, hat and cap-making, rope-making, box shirt and brush-making trades, and tailoresses. Acting in parallel with the WPPL/WTUL, the WTUA had similar and often disappointing results.
By the late 1880s homeworkers were regarded by some observers to be a threat to the country's future. Clementina Black's views on the home influenced the WTUA's attitude to, and policy, about homeworkers: 'To preserve a decent standard of living is absolutely impossible in such circumstances. There is literally no time to be clean and tidy and no time to get proper food.'

Nineteenth century trade unionism was dominated by skilled men in the craft unions. The advent of the 'new unionism' of the unskilled workforce in the late 1880s did not benefit women workers in Spitalfields or elsewhere, although the success of the Match Girls' Strike encouraged women to form their own trade unions. Sweated women workers could anticipate little help from the trade union movement in that it was created by craft and industrial workers, and their employers were mostly middle or large scale capitalists. Only a few male trade unionists, like the Jewish Tailors Union in the East End of London and the Society of Tailors and Tailoresses in Leeds, tried to enrol female members from the sweated trades. Women's position in the work force militated against their joining trade unions. Apart from textile workers in the North West of England, women had shared very few of the benefits enjoyed by male trade unionists and had received little help from them. Further, there was a tradition of men challenging women's right to do any kind of job, originating in the low levels of pay enjoyed by all working women who were regularly paid half or less than half the rate paid to men for the same work. Working men felt aggrieved that women were used as cheap labour and felt no obligation to assist them in their struggle for better wages and conditions.

Women did not remain at their jobs for long periods of time, and this occupational mobility made it difficult to maintain permanent
trade union membership. Most unions were hostile or highly ambivalent to the necessity of organising women workers - for them the priority was the improvement of men's wages and conditions and keeping women out of the workforce. Their antipathy originated in the belief that there was only a fixed amount of work available, and, that to allow women into the workforce would only increase male unemployment. The use of women as strike-breakers in the past had made them powerful enemies within the trade union movement. There was women's trade union activity, but against a back-drop of society's prejudice against married women working. It was hard enough for working-class women to look after their families and earn a wage, besides being committed activists in trade unions. The notion of the public and the private spheres influenced male trade unionists, and this reinforced their hostility to women workers.

London presented particular difficulties in organising working-class women. Even the experienced dockers' leader, Ben Tillett, found it difficult to maintain trade union membership. The WTUL and the WTUA had to contend with a variety of difficulties and obstacles. Trade recessions and the growth of mass produced furniture caused unemployment in the traditional female sections of upholstery and gilding. Some previously supportive male trade unionists withdrew their help when they themselves were faced with trade slumps, mechanisation and de-skilling. The high turnover of women in most jobs after marriage meant that membership fluctuated enormously. Also, a shortage of public rooms in which women could meet, and little spare time from domestic chores made it difficult to sustain female trade unions. Importantly, some of the League's own policies proved unattractive to potential members. Their rather defensive emphasis, not on raising wages, but preventing them being
lowered, a lack of strike procedures and funds, and a wish not to make excessive demands on employers, made it difficult for some recruits to see the point of joining.

There were particular reasons for this situation in the late nineteenth century. The large and growing number of casual, migrant and immigrant labourers flooded a labour market which was already overstocked. The growth of London meant that workers were having to travel greater distances to work, thus making union meetings difficult for those with long journeys at the end of a long working day. The predominance of small workshops and the scattered, isolated and hidden nature of homework, wherever it was done, proved the greatest challenge to women trade unionists trying to organise homeworkers. The well-documented poverty and apathy, exacerbated by bad housing and the erratic supplies of work endemic in the East End of London, meant that women in Spitalfields, whether they were homeworkers or any other kind of worker, were the most difficult workers to unionise. Sylvia Pankhurst would write in her memoirs in 1931 about the success of the mobilisation of support for the women's suffrage campaign in the East End of London just before the First World War and recall how: 'women workers in sweated and unknown trades came to us, telling us their hardships... of hideously unsavoury tenements and asked us to visit and expose them'. Clearly, the local women of whom she wrote were prepared to join branches of the suffragette movement, and were prepared to mobilise and make their protest more vocal and more public - but that was not until 1912, some thirty years after the start of the campaign to abolish homework, and nearly forty years after the founding of the Women's Protective and Provident League. Poverty, domestic ideology, the nature and organisation of homework, and maybe even cultural
resistance would prove to be the greatest obstacles to any measurable success for the women's trade union movement in Spitalfields.

Given the difficulties it is perhaps surprising that the Women's Trade Union League and the Women's Trade Union Association had any success. As Sarah Boston observes, working-class women were socially, economically and legally oppressed. In the world of work they had nothing to aspire to and little occupational status and mobility.\(^{(103)}\)

**JEWISH IMMIGRATION AND HOMEWORKING IN SPITALFIELDS**

An examination of the 1881\(^{(104)}\) Census for Spitalfields noted examples of all women engaged in work that could have been done at home. There is, however, no way of verifying how many actually did homework. The point is that significant numbers of females, single, married and widowed, engaged in economic activities in their own homes and were vilified by a long-running campaign to abolish work being done in the domestic sphere. A total number of 1,662 Spitalfields females were recorded as having done work which might have been done at home. Judging by their surnames and place of birth, (as the Census did not ask for religion) 890 of this figure may have been Jewish. Their names are found in the same categories of work that their female non-Jewish neighbours engaged in. (See Table 1 and Appendix C). They were possibly 53\(^{(105)}\) of the total female homeworking labour force there in 1881. Indeed, whether it was homework (work done entirely at home) or outdoor work/outwork (work taken home to be finished off after a day's work in a workshop) - there is often confusion as different people use these terms differently - Jewish participation was not a factor which informed
the campaign to abolish homework, waged as it was by an overwhelmingly Christian lobby. The Jewish element was a hidden one as there was a consensus that 'married Jewish women didn't work' and therefore they did not do the much-deplored homework. Some Jewish women did work. In the first decade of the twentieth century, single girls worked in clothing workshops ('sweatshops') in London, and in clothing factories and 'sweatshops' in Leeds and Manchester before marriage. Wives and daughters and sisters frequently helped out when their husbands' and fathers' workloads necessitated. Others, who were the wives of pious husbands, in the Eastern European tradition of being the main breadwinner of the family while husbands might study religion, became 'petty capitalists' such as second-hand dealers, market traders and owners of 'parlour shops'. However, in the main, Jewish wives did not go out to work.

Jerry White's study of the Rothschild Buildings in Flower and Dean Street, Spitalfields, in the period 1887-1920, which were occupied by an almost exclusively Jewish population, found that female residents there, mostly widowed mothers, did homework. The oral testimony he collected supports this author's contention that Jewish women did participate in such trades as fur-sewing, garment-making and cigar and cigarette-making in their own homes. Rickie Burman's 1982 study of Jewish women in Manchester between 1890-1920 described how wives engaged in a variety of economic activities which included homework: for example, cap-making, button-holing and machining, in order to support their families. Ezra Mendelsohn's Class Struggle in the Pale (1970) and Harold Pollins's Economic History of the Jews in England (1982), Eugene Black's Social Politics of Anglo-Jewry 1880-1920 (1988), David Cesarani's The Jewish Chronicle and
Anglo-Jewry 1841-1991 (1994) and David Feldman's Englishmen and Jews: Social Relations and Political Culture 1840-1914 (1994) do not discuss the subject of Jewish women engaging in homework. Also, close study of The Jewish Chronicle for the period under review contained no evidence of Jewish women working in their own homes. Thus, both primary and secondary sources have yielded little illumination on the subject of Jewish homeworking women.

A number of issues need to be considered in order to more fully understand the curious silence surrounding Jewish women homeworkers. Consideration of the following points helps clarify and contextualise the phenomenon: the impact of Jewish immigration (on homework) generally and specifically on Spitalfields; the variety of responses by different sections of London Jewry to homework and sweating; and the part played by Jewish trade unionists in the anti-sweating agitation.

The long-established Anglo-Jewish community increased in large numbers from 1881 onwards when many thousands of Russian and Russo-Polish Jews fled the pogroms which followed the assassination of Tsar Alexander II. They also hoped to escape economic hardship and increasingly restrictive state regulations. The first settlement of Jews from Eastern Europe in the capital's East End was in Spitalfields and Whitechapel, the most impoverished part of London. They faced suspicion and hostility aroused by language and cultural differences which were further exacerbated by a housing shortage, in part brought about by slum clearances, and demolitions required for road building and various metropolitan building projects. Further, the mid-Eighties was a period of economic depression, with high levels of unemployment and a driving down of wages. The new arrivals from Russia and Russia-Poland had little experience of an
industrialised factory system, and those who settled in London, a
city of thousands of small workshops, naturally turned to their
traditional trades of garment-making, boot and shoe-making and hat
and cap-making, which were already oversubscribed in London's
overcrowded labour market.\(^{114}\) English trade unionists in these and
allied trades feared the new arrivals, who were labelled 'alien',
would further undercut their wages and drive them out of work.\(^{115}\)
The numbers of small workshops grew and accusations of sweating were
quickly levelled at London's newest Jewish community by investigators
like John Burnett.\(^{116}\) Workers in the East End, and in provincial
towns such as Leeds and Manchester, felt threatened by their
presence. Anti-alienist feelings were soon tapped, culminating in
the House of Lords Report on the Sweating System and House of Commons
investigation into Alien Immigration, two committees which sat in
parallel for the last two years of the 1880s.\(^{117}\)

Women homeworkers, whose supplies of work were always erratic and
vulnerable, probably had little to fear from the new arrivals. In
general, women workers were cheaper than the mostly male immigrant
labour force, and homeworkers were the lowest paid of all workers.
It is unlikely that Jewish semi-skilled and unskilled 'greeners'
would have taken work away from homeworkers. For some employers
immigrant workshop labour may have been preferable as scattered
homeworkers required greater organisation than a group of workers
under one roof. Also, competition had encouraged some Jewish masters
to specialise in certain areas of the clothing trades, for example in
good quality coats, in order to neutralise potential undercutting
from less skilled English and Irish female labour.\(^{118}\) In his
recent analysis of the structure of industry in the Jewish East End,
David Feldman argues that the lives of the people who lived there

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were characterised and often ruled by 'pandemic economic warfare', where 'retailers were in conflict with wholesalers, manufacturers with sub-contractors, sub-contractors with each other and with their workers, immigrants with English artisans on one side and with English and Irish women on the other, workers paid by the time with workers paid by the piece.' In this historical and geographic context it was survival of the cheapest and the fittest."

Clearly Anglo-Jewry, and in particular London Jewry, had to respond to the consequences of an influx of their co-religionists. Their long established welfare work which included a well-organised charitable network to alleviate the worst difficulties, is beyond the scope of this thesis, but its response, or lack of response, to homework and sweating are germane to the 'absent presence' of Jewish homeworking women in places such as Spitalfields. By interfering with their women folk doing homework there was a risk that claims on charitable resources would rise, and would impose an increased burden on the wider community.

The Lancet's inquiry into Polish Jewish tailors in Whitechapel in 1884 put the sweating issue on the political agenda. Although sweating was not a new phenomenon at this time, its public health dangers were given special authority when raised by such a prestigious journal as The Lancet:

The foreign Jews... are so numerous that their presence seriously affects the social and sanitary condition of this part of the metropolis... Their uncleanly habits and ignorance of English ways of living render it difficult to maintain a wholesome condition. (120)

The Jewish Chronicle, 'the organ of Anglo-Jewry', (121) its readership largely middle-class, and keen to assimilate and anglicise the new arrivals as quickly as possible, responded immediately: (122) 'There is only too much truth in the said picture', and a week later: 'We...
are at any rate glad that the sanitary and industrial condition of East End Jews has been taken up by a non-Jewish journal. As to the general truth of the melancholic picture drawn by The Lancet there is, unfortunately, no doubt... the veracity of the statements in The Lancet remains virtually unaffected and it becomes only too clear that a large mass of our poorer brethren in London are suffering from evils which we urgently call for redress."\(^{(123)}\)

Asher Myers, the editor of the *Jewish Chronicle* for much of the period under review, reflected Anglo-Jewry's unhappiness with the presence of large numbers of Eastern European refugees in England. His editorials which discussed and described 'the problem' set the agenda for the debate about immigrants and immigration. Informing his writings were the strongly held beliefs that: English society could not and would not tolerate the differences which made the immigrants different; the fear that English-born Jews would be lumped together with the newly arrived; and thus a rejection of the immigrants would lead to a rejection of the English-born Jews.\(^{(124)}\)

While the *Jewish Chronicle* was sympathetic to Jewish workers' attempts to improve their conditions, the editor was not happy for his co-religionists to be associated with 'the claptrap of socialist agitators'. David Cesarani argues in *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry 1841-1991* that the community was happy for Jews to be organised by local Jewish or non-Jewish clerics or personalities, as some level of trade union activity was deemed desirable to help defuse the charges of exploitation and sweating. While the newspaper did cover the 'Great Tailors' Strike' of 1889, it played down the role of Lewis Lyons and his colleagues.\(^{(125)}\) This, broadly, was the attitude of Anglo-Jewry to the situation of the 1880s, and up to and beyond the turn of the century.

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The Reverend Nathan Adler, Anglo-Jewry's Chief Rabbi, reluctantly engaged in the debate on sweating. He was uncomfortable with the worst responses to the new arrivals and he and the Jewish establishment were at pains to neutralise efforts to blame the Jews for all the excesses of sweating. When called as a witness to the House of Lords Committee on the Sweating System, he and other Jews were keen to prove that not all the lives of his community were like those painted by various investigations, reports and journalism from the early 1880s onwards. He was careful to distance himself from the socialist elements within the Jewish population who called for radical measures to deal with the problems associated with sweated labour and believed that anyone who had ten working fingers should not consider asking for relief from their own community's charitable institutions. He was aware that the findings of The Lancet and other publications had created a very negative impression and he was at pains to avoid politicising the situation any further which he felt would attract further unwanted and hostile attention. When asked for support on more than one occasion by Lewis Lyons in his capacity as strike leader and protector of the unemployed, Adler, and his son Hermann who succeeded him as Chief Rabbi in 1890, refused to be drawn into debate with him and would lend no moral or any other support to the tailors' strikes of the 1880s and beyond. We cannot say that the Adlers' response to homework would have necessarily been the same as their attitude to sweating and trade unionism. However, their point of view was probably shared by other leading Jews: a wish for wages to be earned and a desire to avoid the potentially divisive issues of capital and labour. This was particularly true after the 'Great Tailors' Strike' of 1889 when the influence of atheists and revolutionaries was noted.
The Sabbath Observance League founded in the 1890s allowed the Jewish clergy to articulate concern for the welfare of the workers and address industrial questions through the issue of the observance of the Sabbath.¹²⁹

Certain members of the Anglo-Jewish establishment supported the formation of trade unions to secure fair wages and good working conditions. Some key figures of London Jewry such as Samuel Montagu, were in favour of unions, but only if they were non-striking, and operated within prescribed limits. Trade unions as provident societies¹³⁰ and self-help groups were favoured by a vocal majority who were keen to assimilate and Anglicise, and to be seen to be so doing. The radical demands made by their poorer co-religionists, and their Gentile neighbours, were not supported by the pillars of London Jewry. Sweating and sweated labour were denied as being the sole responsibility of the Jewish community, and proposed remedies were considered cautiously by its leading figures.

It is significant that it was not until 1906 that Lily Montagu, one of the most prominent and best-connected women of Anglo-Jewry (her father was Samuel Montagu, the local Liberal Member of Parliament for Whitechapel), would write about Jewish women doing homework, but only in the most cautious and oblique way. Her brief article in the Daily News's Sweated Industries Catalogue discussed and described homeworkers who made cigarette cases. It was work, she declared which 'means considerable suffering to the makers'. The accompanying photograph (illustration 2 on page 69) is of a cosy and comfortable Jewish home: the Sabbath candles are lit. The six members of the family in the picture, two men and four women, live in a home which is by no means impoverished - it is full of possessions. It is not until the last sentence that Montagu almost coyly tells the
2. CIGARETTE CASE-MAKERS, c. 1906
reader that she is describing Jewish homeworkers, although it is not clear if they are the subject of this particular photograph. She says they are saved from overwork by their observance of the Sabbath, which ensures they get at least one day's rest. Montagu's embarrassment about homework being done by Jewish women was part of a tradition which did not deem this labour as a suitable matter for open discussion and debate. Given these responses it is not surprising that Jewish women homeworkers did not become part of the historical record.

Lewis Lyons was the most prominent Jewish trade unionist in the anti-sweating agitation - between 1885 and 1912 he was involved in nine different tailoring trade unions. Born in 1862 of German parents, he was a tailor's machinist who was politicised by the socialism of the 1880s. He joined the Social Democratic Federation in 1885 and led the first major coordinated strike of Jewish tailors in 1889. As a machinist he had experienced the sweating system at first hand, and in 1886 published a journal, The Anti-Sweater, as part of his crusade against sweaters who made exorbitant profits from their workers. An earlier pamphlet titled The Horrible Sweating System asked readers to: 'buy as many copies as you can afford to support me in my struggle'. Profits were made at: 'the expense of the life's blood of thousands of wretched creatures... profits made by a system of cruel slavery and unjust tyranny calls for the censure of all honourable and right dealing men'.

In 1887 Lyons spoke at a meeting on foreign immigration and sweating at Brick Lane Schoolrooms in Whitechapel, in an atmosphere created by the growing number of publications which blamed Jews for sweated working and living conditions. He moved a resolution which condemned the sweating system and suggested ways of improving
workers' lives by better sanitary arrangements, the registration of workshops, and greater and more diligent supervision by factory inspectors and sanitary officers. The resolution was adopted without difficulty.\(^{(137)}\)

Reports of the evidence presented to the House of Lords Committee on the Sweating System during the next two years, 1888-1890, would have been closely studied by Lyons as he himself had been a witness. In the heady days of the successes of 'new unionism', notably the victory of the Match Girls' Strike (1888) and 'the Great Dock Strike' (1889), Lyons led the 1889 'Great Tailors' Strike' in his capacity as Secretary of the Jewish Branch of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors.\(^{(138)}\) His members were not prepared to wait for their Lordships to deliver their recommendations in 1890.\(^{(139)}\) The strike was called in late August and their demands included: a twelve-hour working day, (14-18 hour days were not uncommon); the working day to include an hour for lunch and half an hour for tea; meals to be taken off the premises; and sweaters and Government contractors not to give their employees work to finish off at home after their working day.\(^{(140)}\) Over six thousand tailors stopped work, a hundred and twenty workshops closed down, the dockers' leaders spoke in support, the Social Democratic Federation and the Socialist League were involved, and Samuel Montagu intervened as a mediator.\(^{(141)}\) While most of their demands were met and victory was proclaimed their success quickly evaporated and soon the masters were breaking the terms of the settlement. Lyons realised that uniting all tailors would stand the greatest chance of long-term success in ending the exploitation of workers caused by the sweating system. In the past, differences in language, customs, work practices, and the stirring up of anti-alienist feelings, had undermined cooperation between the
East End Jewish tailors and their Gentile counterparts. Lyons and many of his fellow Jewish trade union activists approached the anti-sweating agitation from a socialist perspective which emphasised the importance of the brotherhood of labour and made repeated and concerted attempts to unionise Jews and Gentiles in their trades.

Nowhere in his writings does Lyons mention Jewish women homeworkers, although he did denounce homework when giving evidence to the House of Lords Committee on the Sweating System. With regard to the female workers in his own industry, occasionally he commented on the appalling work conditions of tailoresses in East London, and in 1886 he spoke to the young female workers at Schneider and Son's, and Lottery and Company's clothing factories in Whitechapel. The main focus of his concern was the exploitation of men and women in factories and 'sweatshops', and the need to recruit them into active trade unions. His silence on Jewish female homeworkers within the tailoring industry is curious. As far as Lyons was concerned homeworkers were beyond the scope of his activities even though by their cheap labour they were said by many of his contemporaries to pose a serious threat to the livelihoods of all factory and workshop workers in the clothing trades. In this matter Lyons shared many Jewish and non-Jewish trade unionists' ambivalence towards homework and homeworkers. Poverty kept Jewish women's homeworking off the political agenda. The need to earn a living was powerfully present in Spitalfields, and if Jewish women had to do it, then so be it. Economic and political imperatives were the driving dynamics in this non-issue.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century debate about homeworking did not feature Jewish women's involvement. Further, it was not an issue as far as the Jewish community itself was concerned,
and certainly not an issue to be openly discussed. Given the negative comments which informed the debate and the wider context of the anti-sweating and anti-alien immigration agitation, Jewish women or their male relatives who did take work into their own homes did not want to be exposed to hostile scrutiny from the host community. There were powerful cultural reasons for not drawing attention to this practice. A Jewish woman's religious and domestic duties were indissolubly linked and carefully prescribed, and to admit that the special and semi-sacred domain of their homes were being defiled by homework was not to be countenanced readily. In particular those newly-arrived Jews of the 1880s were the focus of the much broader brush strokes of anti-Semitic politicking at this time. Accusations of sweating, of working excessive hours for low pay, and in insanitary conditions, had to be vigorously defended and denied. Their women-folk's economic activities in the home was not to be part of the bigger picture. There is also a lack of sympathy from Anglo-Judaism's most senior clerical figures, the Reverends Nathan and Hermann Adler. When asked by the prominent Jewish trade unionist Lewis Lyons to support the Eight Hour Day movement to end sweating, and to help the Jewish unemployed, Nathan Adler's reply was that if they were discussing sweating then he too sweated!\(^{(145)}\) The work ethic was the cornerstone of Jewish culture, and if women worked in their own homes for small wages, then so be it. So for economic, political and cultural reasons Jewish homeworking women were not players in the unfolding drama which is the subject of this study.
The first signpost to the future of the homework issue was erected by a House of Lords report on sweated labour which heard evidence from 1888-1890.

The report by John Burnett, the Labour Correspondent to the Board of Trade, on 'The Sweating System at the East End of London', published in September 1887, which preceded their Lordships' investigation, was based on the evidence produced about the poor and their homes from 1883 and 'The Bitter Cry' onwards. The inquiry focused on the tailoring trade and included a potted history of the development of sweated labour and its extensive sub-division in London's East End. A 'mania' for cheap clothing, Burnett maintained, had fuelled this process, de-skilled labour and brought wages down to starvation levels in an already overstocked labour market. He claimed that the situation in the East End had been exacerbated by an influx of Eastern European paupers that decade:

But for this special cause there would be no demand for an inquiry on the subject of the evil, ... in this way has grown up in our midst a system so bad in itself and so surrounded by adherent evils as to have caused not only among the workers themselves great suffering and misery but in the minds of others grave apprehensions of public danger.

Burnett briefly discussed East End homeworkers, acknowledging the dearth of information on them:

This is the division of the clothing trade about which the facts are most difficult to obtain. These workers are under no supervision whatsoever, but work under what conditions and for as many or as few hours as they please. They are mainly of the most needy class and with stern necessity for their task there can be little doubt that for very short remuneration they work very long hours.
He cited a house-to-house inquiry in Spitalfields and Whitechapel conducted by Toynbee Hall in 1884 which interviewed people who had applied for financial help from the Charity Organisation Society and the Jewish Board of Guardians. The aim of the inquiry was to 'ascertain if it was desirable and necessary to move for the establishment in the East End of a Government clothing manufactory similar to the one at Pimlico'. The report included a number of case studies of women homeworkers: a trouser-maker who never earned more than two shillings a day; a waist-coat maker who only earned five shillings a week and had to provide her own needles and thread; a coat-maker who earned a maximum of ten or eleven shillings a week; and a trouser machinist who made ten pairs a day at three pence each.

His conclusions were, he stated, in 'moderate language and without exaggeration.' Citing the arguments both for and against the sweating system, he summarised the views of its supporters: that the demand for clothing could only be met in this way; middlemen were not overpaid for their role; cheap foreign labour supported Britain's prominent position as the chief manufacturer of clothing; and the labour force was paid according to the laws of supply and demand.

The larger and more vocal body of critics opposed sweated labour because: it crowded the labour market with cheap immigrant labour which forced native labour out of work; middlemen's profits acted as a tax on workers; the conditions under which the clothing trade was carried out - the low wages, excessive hours, semi-starvation of the workers, the insanitary conditions, the overcrowding - 'render it destructive to the physical, social and moral fabric of the entire community'; unless immigration was controlled English workers would
be demoralized and disorganised and 'race hatreds and their own natural results' would develop.

The remedies for the problem of sweated labour outlined in Burnett's report included: reduction of working hours; reduction of immigration of foreigners; outlawing sweated labour in Government contracts; a nationwide inquiry into sweated labour; stricter enforcement of Factory and Public Health Acts by more inspectors and the compulsory registration of all rooms and other places used as workshops. These measures, if adopted, would have had a major impact on the Spitalfields homeworkers who only existed because the labour market was so unregulated, as too much interference made homework unattractive to employers. Homeworkers played only a small part in his report, but they were there. In the following two years the 'problem' of homework became a political issue with moral, social, public health and racial implications.

Knowledge of Charles Booth's preliminary findings on labour and poverty in Tower Hamlets, and those of Her Majesty's Inspector of Factories and Workshops, Mr Lakeman's study on women's work in London, prompted renewed demands for an inquiry into East End sweating and the implementation of solutions suggested in Burnett's report. In February 1888 persistent requests for action were made in the House of Lords by the Earl of Dunraven who stated that while the 'evils' of sweated labour were endemic in trades all over the country he wished to 'call attention to a very great and crying evil which existed in the ready made clothing trade in the East End of London'. Burnett's findings were a 'disgrace in a civilised state' and it 'was almost impossible for human beings to exist in such conditions'. Dunraven underlined the gravity of 'the intolerable sufferings' of sweated women workers and the consequences
such that 'men and women had to work eighteen hours a day for merely starvation wages... women were driven to a life of dishonour upon the street.' He blamed Jews for overcrowding the labour market and undercutting wages and called for a searching inquiry into this 'very grave evil in our midst' which was 'an ulcer in the body politic which if it could not be cured ought not to be neglected.'

Dunraven's views were the result of an ideological partnership with the anti-alien agitator Arnold White. In 1886 they had founded The Society for the Suppression of the Immigration of Destitute Aliens, Dunraven as its President. From 1883-1885 he had been President of the Fair Trade League. Given his highly partial views his appointment as Chairman of the House of Lords Committee into sweated labour in the East End of London is remarkable. However Dunraven was not the only member of the House of Lords to link sweating and immigration. His views were shared by the Lord Sandhurst and the Archbishop of Canterbury. The need to deal with homeworkers was stated in these earliest calls for a thoroughgoing inquiry by the Earl of Onslow, Secretary to the Board of Trade, who reminded his colleagues that they were beyond the scope of all existing factory legislation.

On March 3rd 1888 The Lancet joined in the chorus for a more detailed study of sweated labour. It reminded its readers of their own pioneering study of 1884: 'We showed the danger of allowing homework in the tailoring trade.' Its findings about the 'dens' of East End Polish Jews had been 'heartrending'. Its role, The Lancet claimed, had been crucial in the current agitation, and in initiating the House of Lords report. Two weeks later the British Medical Journal also called for action:

Local authorities should be forced to ensure that workshops were clean and wholesome workplaces... the filthy conditions of these workshops and dwelling houses...
atmosphere is pestiferous and overcrowding excessive, ought not to be allowed. \(^{(135)}\)

On March 9th 1888 a House of Lords Committee was appointed to 'inquire into the Sweating System at the East End of London'. The Committee included the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Earls of Onslow, Derby, Clinton, Clifford of Chudleigh, Dunraven and Lords Rothschild, Monkswell and Thring; (see Appendices F and G). Dunraven was Chairman.\(^{(136)}\) On the first day Charles Booth gave his views on the nature and causes of sweating. Born into an affluent Liverpool Unitarian shipping family he became interested in poverty and social issues in the 1880s. In 1888 he was a Fellow of the Royal Statistical Society and was conducting an inquiry into the whole of the East End 'for his own pleasure'. His studies were not yet complete, but were due to be published in the Society's Journal. In his view cut-throat competition was an important factor in sweating and that newly-arrived Jews were to blame for exacerbating the sweating system:

They arrive destitute, often without any knowledge of any trade and for a long time they know no language but their own... their compatriots are hardly any better off themselves and can only share with the newcomers their wretched accommodation and ill paid work. The result is an aggravation of every evil; the condition of the houses becomes indescribable and the slavery of the sweating system is intensified. \(^{(158)}\)

On April 7th 1888 an editorial in the *East London Advertiser* titled 'Women Slaves' drew attention to the report by Her Majesty's Inspector of Factories, Mr Lakeman, on 'The Social Condition of Female Workshop Operatives in the Central Metropolitan District' which was not 'pleasant reading'. Their pay was 'wretched in the extreme and the conditions under which they carry on their work in the East End are as unhealthy and as miserable as their pay is
Collar and shirt-makers earned six shillings a week, finishers three shillings a week and plain hands a shilling a day. The fur trade was the 'most awful' area of women's work. It was badly paid and unhealthy. Lakeman found: 'the smell from the dye is disagreeable and the fluff from the skins is irritating.' One woman he interviewed worked twelve hours a day for five shillings a week. The sternly-worded editorial linked social unrest, poverty and sweating:

It is hardly to be wondered at that revolutionary doctrines prevail in London when the fact is recalled that this squalor and wretchedness exists side by side in the metropolis with the greatest wealth and luxury... the only remedy seems to be the abolition of the numerous middlemen who intervene between the purchaser and the worker. Innumerable difficulties attend any reform in this direction but it is one means by which this terrible blot on our civilization can be removed and no pains should be spared by private enterprise and state intervention of necessary to carry it out. 

The first mention of female homeworkers came on April 13th. The witness, Arnold White, believed that hardship cases were inevitable if legislation curbed the activities of these women and 'would press... upon some individuals; but it is a choice of evils'. White, who so often portrayed English (meaning Gentile) women homeworkers as being at the mercy of the Jews,¹⁶⁰ was an imperialist author and crusader against Jewish immigrants.¹⁶¹ Bernard Gainer and W.J. Fishman cast doubt on his reliability as a witness. Gainer draws attention to his activities from the mid 1880s onwards. In 1886 his reputation as an anti-alienist suffered a setback with the failure of the Society of the Suppression of the Immigration of Destitute Aliens. He stood unsuccessfully as a Home Rule candidate for the constituency of Mile End in the same year. Once their Lordships Committee on Sweating had been appointed, White worked hard to produce witnesses to support his thesis. At his own expense he hired
two firms of solicitors to find them and sift their evidence. He also gave evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee on Alien Immigration sitting at the same time. His style was to make general statements on sweating and then use witnesses to support his comments and allegations. He came unstuck, says Gainer, when he attacked Maples, the furniture manufacturers. His chief witness turned out to be a failed tradesman with a grudge against Maples. Of the fifty witnesses the solicitors had found for him, only a small number were 'greener' [newly arrived Jewish immigrants]. When the Committee discovered this, White had to provide another fifty at his own expense. Despite these embarrassing blunders the Committee defended him, but his reputation suffered a severe blow. Ten years later he was still trying to live it down. W.J. Fishman describes him as a xenophobe and anti-Jewish exclusionist.

Given the discrediting of White, we should look carefully at his comments on homeworkers. It is true that many of his witnesses had their own axe to grind but White's fervour to see anti-alien legislation succeed informed all the evidence he presented to the Committee. Women homeworkers were part of his campaign against the presence of Jews in this country.

The evidence of a local vicar, Reverend Munro, was colourful and impressionistic. He claimed to have worked with White 'on a number of problems that arise in the East End'. His evidence concentrated on the risk of infection spread by clothing made in squalid homes. Poverty-stricken women were blamed for undercutting and sweating their sisters in East London: 'She will go to the sweater and offer to take the work sometimes at a farthing and sometimes I have known at a half-penny less. Thus it is that the prices become reduced by...
the keen competition of the workers themselves.' Homeworkers, he alleged, posed the greatest threat of disease by spreading infection:

I have seen the garments on the shoulders of the poor while they are working at their machines... to keep warm I have seen children lying asleep covered with them at night and a child lying ill with the measles with garments from one of the sweaters as its covering. The home life of those women working and living and sleeping in one room, renders it impossible for them to take any exercise excepting when they go and come with the work to and from the shop... in the hot season vermin is very often found in the cloth and I have seen the work taken into several of the larger houses and you will invariably notice a taker-in of the work taking his shears and killing the worst of the vermin creeping up the garments. ('64')

He believed that any attempts to deal with homework by putting all work into factory production were bound to be compromised by the ready supply of women prepared to do this work. ('65')

On April 24th, six homeworkers were called to give evidence to the Committee. It was their first opportunity to speak for themselves. One was a widow, two had sick husbands and three were married to erratically employed dock labourers. Two were trouser-finishers and four were shirt-machinists and finishers.

Mrs Isabella Killick, a trouser-finisher, had three children aged ten, seven and three to support; and her husband was dying. She could not finish more than four pairs of trousers a day for which she earned a maximum of one shilling and two pence, out of which she had to provide materials and trimmings and pay for her own fire and light: 'Altogether I do not clear one shilling a day... and then I have to work many hours to do that. I am up at six o'clock every morning and never get done till eight at night.' The rent was two shillings a week and the amount of poor relief she received varied from three pence three farthings to six pence a week. Her daily diet was meagre: 'Chiefly I get a herring and a cup of tea... As for meat I do not eat it, I get meat once in six months.' Once rent and
trimmings were paid for there was only five shillings a week to live on.\(166\)

Mrs Mary Hayes, a widow, hand-finished trousers with her daughter. Between them they completed eight pairs in a ten to twelve hour working day. Their daily earnings totalled one shilling and ten pence, out of which they provided cotton, trimmings and heat: 'When I take my trimmings... out... I do not suppose it leaves me with above five shillings and six pence a week.' She was ashamed to describe her diet, 'bread and a cup of tea and such as a bit of fish or anything of that sort'.\(167\)

The erratic employment of Mrs Lavinia Casey's husband, a dock labourer, meant that she had to do homework. She made two dozen shirts a day at a rate of seven or eight pence a dozen. The hire of her sewing machine was two shillings and six pence a week and she had to provide her own thread. Often she was left with less than four shillings a week, more than half of which went on rent: 'I begin at seven or eight in the morning and have to work sometimes until eleven at night.' With young children to attend to she had many interruptions and this lengthened her working day.\(168\)

Miss Frances Amelia Liddle was a shirt machinist in Poplar whose husband was in hospital. To make a dozen and a half shirts a day she worked very long hours, and earned seven or eight pence a dozen: 'I have sat until twelve and one at night... the children have been so tiresome and so cross that I have had to keep leaving off to attend to them.' Her earnings could be as little as five shillings a week, at best seven shillings, out of which she paid two shillings and six pence a week for the hire of her sewing machine, and nine pence for trimmings.\(169\)
Mrs Susan Attewell presented the case of a wife of a casual dock labourer having to be the breadwinner for themselves and their three children whenever her husband was out of work. She was a shirt-machinist. When employed his wages were three shillings and four pence a day in the summer, but only two shillings and eleven pence from November to March, depending on the length of daylight. Machining shirts at seven pence a dozen she earned one shilling and two pence a day, by working from seven in the morning to eight at night. Earning five shillings a week, it cost her one shilling and six pence to hire her sewing machine and six pence for the thread. Sometimes she earned as little as three shillings and 'by the time I have paid my rent and firing I do not reckon I have more than six pence a day to find bread for my children'. Their diet was monotonous and had little nutritional value: 'A bit of bread and butter and a cup of tea, very often we have to go till the evening till I get the money when I take the work in and get paid for it.'

Mrs Eliza Glazier was the last homeworker to give evidence. Her husband, a sixty-seven year old dock labourer, was in poor health and rarely employed: 'Sometimes he does not earn a farthing for a fortnight or three weeks,' and when he did work he earned on average four shillings a week. Her wages as a shirt-finisher were pitifully low.

The alleged correlation between homework and the spread of infectious disease was given authority and prominence by the witnesses to the Lords Committee. Several declared that infectious diseases were rife in the East End home industries. Reverend Adamson, the Vicar of Old Ford, Bow, for the past thirteen years,
said that disease was spread on contaminated boots and clothing passed from 'hand to hand in home workshops'.

If your Lordships will excuse my referring to a very delicate matter in connection with ladies of the West End who wear silk mantles... there are people in my parish who make them and get seven pence half-penny for making them... throughout... and they have to find their own cotton and silk and oil for the machines... The selling price of these articles is never under sixteen shillings and could be considerably more.

Recently he had visited a homeworker in his parish:

I went in to a little room where there was a bedstead and three machines... the windows were shut and your Lordships may judge of the sanitary condition of that room when I say that accustomed as I am to these things, I was quite giddy when I came from the room. The bed was covered with boots and shoes in all stages of progress, the floor was the same and there was paste and other materials that they use smelling in that room.

Adamson was sure infectious diseases like scarlet fever were spread via the articles made in these homes. '172'

Lewis Lyons expressed hostile views on homeworkers. His evidence in May 1888 played on the public health risks, and insisted that the public know about the dangers: 'they want their work made in sanitary places and it is very often the case that a disease breaks out in a family and the doctors are perplexed in discovering the origins of that disease.' '173'

During that summer The Lancet enhanced its growing reputation as the guardian of the public's health by publishing its investigations into the sweating system throughout the country, in Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Glasgow and Edinburgh. The project had been 'fraught with many difficulties and some personal risks... we have also shown that so far as the interests of public health are concerned legislation is urgently required in the workshops and in

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the homes of the individual workers.' The best masters often had the worst workshops. It warned their readers:

It does not follow that because a customer pays a large price for clothes and orders them from a tailor of the best repute that they will be free from the danger of contamination... they may be made by sweaters... trousers and vests were often made by homeworkers especially if they had to be made in great haste.

Customers should order their clothes and find out in advance of delivery how and where they were made. The Lancet was especially concerned about homeworkers. Its survey had revealed that they were immune to the Factory Acts and Sanitary Laws, and their homes were often insanitary. The journal concluded that central to the problem of homeworkers and disease was the sanctity of the home: 'It is under the cover of secrecy which the privacy of the home renders possible most of the abuses that have arisen.' So grave was the risk to the public's health that The Lancet was prepared to demand the legalised invasion of the home by outsiders: 'throw these private homes open to the sanitary and factory inspectors and it will be possible to control at once the hygiene and economic conditions of the workers.'

The campaign waged by The Lancet was entirely in keeping with the reforming and educational purposes of its founder, Doctor Thomas Wakley. He was a man who was driven by a hatred of injustice and used his periodical, which he founded in 1823, to expose the nepotism behind medical appointments in London, and to disseminate recent medical information, which the London hospitals regarded as their own property, to doctors all over the country. He became an MP in 1835, was known in the Press as 'The Member for Medicine', a campaigner for reform in medical politics, and legislation against the adulteration of food was due to his efforts. He was also coroner for thirteen
years. When Thomas Wakley died in 1862 his youngest son became
director and on Wakley's death in 1886, Thomas Wakley's eldest son and
a grandson took over. During the period under review, all the
Wakleys edited The Lancet very much in accordance with the founder's
principles. There was a continuity of purpose in the journal's
history which was educational and crusading. (176)

Mr J. Holley, President of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, was
concerned about the dangers. Tailors were keen to legislate homework
out of existence, it often undercut their wages, and did not help
their working conditions. His evidence was informed by his job, to
protect the interests of his members:

We are quite clear that garments made up without the
supervision of the employers away from their premises, may
possibly carry death and disease with them... we have it on
the best authority of our medical men that such is the case;
they say nothing in the world is so capable of carrying
disease as woollen garments or retaining it so long. (176)

Although powers did exist to disinfect articles which had become
infected, given the conditions in the East End of London it was
unlikely that Section 38 of the 1866 Sanitary Act could or would be
enforced to any appreciable extent. Local Medical Officers of
Health, if told about the infected items, could insist they were
disinfecte (177)

On August 3rd 1888, the Committee's terms of reference were
extended from inquiring into East End sweating, to a study of the
United Kingdom as a whole. (178) The Lancet maintained its attack on
sweating in general, and homework in particular. Referring to the
Committee's evidence it warned:

Public health is compromised by the grinding poverty and
consequent hardship endured by those who receive altogether
inadequate wages. It is further endangered by the
insanitary, filthy and overcrowded conditions of the
workshops and the homes of the workers. All we have said
about bad sanitation is amply confirmed by the Minutes of Evidence now published.

The Lancet reminded its readers of Reverend Munro's view that women homeworkers represented the worst phase of the sweating system because the women were eager to work all week for four shillings if necessary. The vicar was sure that 25,000 London seamstresses worked in their own homes. The concern was that uniforms and other articles made for Government contracts could become infected with disease in the homeworkers' homes. Mr G.D. Ramsey from the Government's Clothing Factory in Pimlico told the Committee that they had largely stopped giving out work to homeworkers - it was only given out to long-standing workers who were well-known to them. Their aim was to stop or substantially reduce homework and avoid the spread of infectious diseases. Mr J.B. Lakeman presented further evidence which suggested that infectious diseases could be easily transmitted on clothing made by homeworkers.

The model of homeworkers as a scourge of the public's health was established by the evidence presented to the Committee. Customers were at risk from infectious diseases like scarlet fever, smallpox and consumption. The squalor of their homes was described in graphic detail, not the cosy images embroidered in 'Home Sweet Home' samplers, but as dens of 'pestiferous and pestilential disease'. The fabric of society could be undermined and contaminated by these women, not just in Spitalfields but in poor districts everywhere.

On May 15th, an East End MP, Mr Norris (Progressive Conservative, Tower Hamlets, Limehouse) pressed the Secretary of State for the Home Department to enlarge the scope of the Factory Acts by the compulsory registration of all workshops not yet covered.
by the Act and to increase the powers of the Inspectors. The Secretary of State replied that it would be premature to act until the Committee had completed its inquiries. It was recalled that Lakeman had told their Lordships that he did not want homework abolished outright: 'it would be a very great hardship and it would do people a great injustice, because why should not a woman work in her own home if she is industrious enough to do it?... I would only allow it to be done under such conditions that it would not be injurious to the health of the people.' He suggested repealing Section 16 of the 1878 Factory and Workshop Act and a new clause: 'We have got so many exemptions and modifications in this Act that it takes away the whole intention of the law. We are not able to hold the people in our hands in some trades as we should like.' He was mindful of the poverty which made homework necessary:

We have gone into lots of places which would come under Section 16; places where a woman worked with her children in one room, eating, drinking and sleeping... we go in and out again and that is all we can do... It is a wonderfully difficult question to know how to touch the lower stratum of these unfortunate creatures in the East End of London.

Lakeman explained how economics had defeated the 1878 Factory and Workshop Act:

The trades of London are increasing and extra space is required for the storage of these goods, places that were used for workrooms are now used for warehouses and the work as far as it can be done is done in the people's homes, whereby the master escapes the necessity for supervision, gas and so forth... he gives the work and it is brought back to him... It is extending through London and it is one of the very things that upset the good that Factory Laws should do.

He deplored the 'freedom' that homework gave to the females who did it: 'As girls will work at home they will work how they like, late or early; for unfortunately it gives them the habit of easiness of life
which we have reason to know eventuates in a condition which is not good.'

Various solutions to the problem were proposed during the two years their Lordships heard evidence. The consensus was that if homework was a fact of economic life and that if it was not to be abolished outright, the first step was to legislate for the registration of 'home workshops'. Trade unionists wanted vigorous inspection and the registration of all rooms where any kind of work was done. Their members had wages undercut by homeworkers. The East End vicars were unequivocal in their support for the inspection of homeworkers' rooms. Reverend Billing declared:

It should be unlawful to carry on... the making of clothes in ill-ventilated and crowded rooms where the whole family has to live... [in Spitalfields] they have to live by day and sleep by night there... but when you think of what is at stake, surely it would be regarded as necessary expenditure.

And yet Billing and others frequently made conflicting distinctions, believing that rooms where a family was working should be exempt from registration, thus preserving its privacy. Not everybody agreed that it was acceptable for a father to sweat his wife and children. Mr Miers, a boot manufacturer: 'I cannot see why a man should be allowed to work his wife and children longer than anybody else's wife and child.'

Only two witnesses spoke against revising the 1878 Act and registering private rooms as workshops. Beatrice Potter, an assistant on Booth's survey The Life and Labour of the People of London, was sure that this would lead to an increase in homeworkers: 'It would tend to drive the trade into lower channels of homework and you would have the fringe of women making a coat for seven pence getting bigger and bigger.' For her the problem of homework had to
be dealt with in toto and not on a piecemeal basis. She was not opposed in principle to the registration of dwellings if the onus was placed on the landlord and not on the homeworker. Mr Davies, a wholesale furrier who gave out homework in Spitalfields, also believed that regulation would increase their numbers. Yet he and other employers stood to gain from any situation which encouraged the growth of this work, and one can guess at his reasons for expressing this view. (See Appendix H)

The risk to the public's health from clothing made in squalid homes was the cornerstone of the campaign to abolish homework. Seven witnesses of the Committee's proceedings in 1888 expressed this view. Charles Booth declared his abhorrence of it; Lewis Lyons called it an 'evil' which could only be solved by legislation, and higher wages for men via increased trade union activity to reduce women's need; William Hawes, Manager of the Working Women's Cooperative Association supported Lyons' stance; and Solomon Plattman, a tailor's machinist, urged that all work be done in carefully regulated factories and 'not in backrooms and garrets.'

Rather more witnesses opposed the abolition of homework. Profit was the obvious motivation for the employers who gave evidence. Vested interests spoke out, only thinly disguised, as a genuine wish to preserve this work for the poorest in the labour force. Certain witnesses demonstrated an understanding of its centrality to poor women's lives. Mr Madden, Secretary of the East London Branch of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, made a plea for its survival. This was unusual from an East End trade unionist:

"These women are compelled to do it because their wants are so great... that they cannot meet all the demands unless they help their husbands and it is the only means supplied to them of doing so."
Registration of home workshops was the preferred option, he opined.

Whilst the Reverends Adamson, Billing and Munro were concerned by the public health dangers, they were aware of the poverty and knew something of the culture of the local women. Adamson was concerned that abolition would increase hardship: 'Many women could never go to factories... such a measure would add to their poverty.' Munro did not object to homework as long as it was done in clean rooms, realising that many of the women 'were married and could not come out; they have small children and could not leave their families' if they were forced to work in regulated factories and workshops. He cited the tradition of homework in the East End and implied that it was so strong that abolitionist legislation would have no impact at all.

The House of Lords continued to hear evidence through 1889. While it was being presented and evaluated, voices outside Parliament also debated the 'problem of the evil of homework'. A different note was introduced which contradicted contemporary attitudes. The prevailing stereotype of homeworkers as dirty women working in squalid homes was challenged by Margaret Harkness, a socialist and feminist who sometimes wrote under the pseudonym of John Law. She described Miss O, a matchbox-maker in Bow:

Miss O presents a pleasant picture as she sits plying her deft handicraft by the clean deal table. Her dark hair might be better brushed perhaps; her brass earrings are rather too long for the taste of the fastidious and her working dress is a little shabby. But there is nothing abject or downtrodden about her... By getting up at five and working till nine in the evening she could make eight gross boxes and earn one shilling a eight pence a day.

However, Harkness' socialist sympathies were coloured by concern for the public health implications of goods made in unhealthy conditions.
Middle-class female consumers had to take responsibility for the risks they were taking:

Thus a lady will learn that the toothbrush which she uses in the morning and evening passed through the hands of a starving child; that the sofa on which she sits is stuffed with rabbit down that has stifled the poor widow; that the tennis ball with which she plays tennis came from a room in which children lay ill with scarlet fever. People sometimes wonder how epidemics creep into carefully guarded households. They quite forget that the vermin and smallpox of which they are so much afraid, that they carefully avoid the slums of the metropolis, come to them through these home industries. (190)

The public health dangers of homework were the persistent theme of the Sweating Committee's proceedings. In February 1889, Edward Squire, Physician to the North London Hospital for Consumption, gave evidence on the danger of infection being passed to the consumer on clothing made in unhealthy workshops and private dwellings:

I have seen patients ill with scarlet fever kept at home from want of recognition of the disease... and their parents... working in the same room as them and in that case of course the garments that [are] made would very possibly carry infection to wherever they were taken. (200)

The diseases mentioned by The Lancet, The British Medical Journal (201) and Dr Squire had high mortality rates throughout the nineteenth century, especially in crowded, working-class districts. Tuberculosis, or 'the white plague', was associated with poverty, poor nutrition and bad housing, spreading most rapidly when there was repeated exposure to an infected person in a confined area. (202)

Smallpox was the only epidemic disease of the nineteenth century which was contained by compulsory vaccination, first introduced in 1853. The 1871 Smallpox Act fined parents who refused to have their children vaccinated, and yet the anti-vaccination movement was strong by the end of the century, rooted in a dislike of central government interference. By 1900 the disease was in decline owing to the sustained efforts of local Medical Officers of Health. (203)
Scarlet fever was a major threat to children under the age of ten. The epidemic of 1880 claimed the lives of one in every five children. It was highly infectious and quarantine was impossible for those who lived in crowded conditions. Isolation, notification and better milk helped reduce mortality rates. The disease went into decline before the end of the century, but had claimed the lives of a thousand London children in 1891. Diphtheria was one of the most feared childhood diseases. The bacteria was not isolated until 1883, and an anti-toxin was not available until 1894. Like scarlet fever it inflicted a high mortality, 20-25% of those affected. Contaminated milk supplies and compulsory school attendance were cited as important factors in the rapid increase in deaths of children from both of these diseases.

From the standpoint of current medical thinking it seems that in the 1880s The Lancet and The British Medical Journal were right to express concern about the likely spread of these illnesses to consumers via the goods made in insanitary places. Modern medical opinion is that clothing would be a vector for the spread of these contagious diseases. The most difficult and expensive solution was to clean up the homes of the homeworkers who posed such a threat to the consumer. The cheapest way was to stop women doing this kind of work altogether. Public health was the issue in a debate which ignored the poverty which caused women to take up this kind of work. A range of measures were needed to protect everyone, the worker, the children and the consumer. Let us remember that Mary MacArthur, a champion of sweated workers, caught diphtheria in 1907/8 and nearly died after visiting the home of a homeworker.

The Lancet maintained its attack on this issue in an article 'Crusade Against Sweating', and was optimistic about the future
safety of the public's health. It was encouraged by the response so far although it conceded that: 'no great radical change has taken place.' (207) The opinion was quoted of a factory surgeon, who knew Whitechapel and Spitalfields well, and was certain that dangerous diseases were spread by clothing made up in rooms where there were children suffering from smallpox, measles and scarlatina:

I do not say to a large extent but I am certain that infectious diseases are spread thereby... I have visited patients suffering from smallpox and scarlet fever in rooms where half-finished garments were used to cover up and keep the patients warm. (208)

The Lancet made no direct reference to the testimony of the doctors to the Committee, but kept the discussion wide-ranging. Their editorials took the view that the existing factory and workshop legislation needed amending and better enforcement. In August 1889 they discussed a Bill which had recently been introduced into the House of Commons by Mr Baumann (209) (Conservative MP for Peckham) which aimed to extend the provisions of the 1878 Factory Act:

To all dwellings which were used as workshops... it may seem to some that the Bill interferes unduly with the relations between employers and employed. This is not the case. Its introduction is a simple consequence of existing mismanagement and a protest which has long been called for in the mere interests of public health. (210)

There was no political will to amend the factory laws and the Bill did not succeed.

During 1889 the Lords Committee broadened its inquiries into women's sweated labour in different parts of the country and called nine female homeworkers. Their evidence confirmed the widespread nature of women's participation in the sweating system, and their comments placed Spitalfields' homeworkers at the bottom of the employment hierarchy and underlined their position as the most exploited group in the workforce. (211)
The House of Lords Report was published in May 1890. They had received evidence on seventy-one occasions and examined 291 witnesses from 'experts' including: clergymen; physicians; factory and sanitary inspectors; trade unionists; Medical Officers of Health; journalists; the Chief Rabbi; officials from the Jewish Board of Guardians; manufacturers; middlemen; factory and workshop employees and homeworkers. The presence of the witnesses from medical and sanitary backgrounds emphasised that their Lordships perceived sweated labour and homework to be a public health matter.\(^2\)17\)

East End newspapers denounced homework at every opportunity. It was done: 'in a wretched room that has to serve them for all purposes. This is vile and immoral from the standpoint of health, a thoroughly dangerous system.'\(^2\)13\) Combined with a desire to legislate insanitary dwellings and homeworkers out of existence, and the perceived need to protect the public's health, was the influential wish to preserve the sanctity of the home. Financial considerations played their part as further inspectorial legislation would have required an army of new appointments to even attempt to ensure that homework was done only in wholesome premises.

But what was to be done about the problem? The Lords equivocated and cited all the options. They urged compulsory registration and inspection 'of all workplaces in which three or more persons work, whether they are set up in private dwellings or buildings erected for that purpose' but baulked at promoting abolition:

The most important question is whether any agreement can be found for this unhappy state of a portion of the labouring class. With respect to low wages and excessive hours of labour, we think that good may be effected by the extension of cooperative societies and well-considered combination amongst the workers. We are aware that homeworkers form a great obstacle in the way of combination as... they cannot readily be brought to combine for the purposes of raising wages. To remove this obstacle we have been urged to recommend for the prohibition by legislation of working at home, but we think that such a measure would be arbitrary.
and oppressive, not sanctioned by any precedent in existing law and impossible to be effectually enforced.

They did, however, cite Australian attempts to regulate homework, whereby employers kept up-to-date lists which were supplied to authorised inspectors.\(^{(214)}\)

The Lords Committee believed that once all the legislation that could be enforced was enforced to the highest possible standard, then the existence of sweated homework should be regarded as a moral dilemma. When full awareness of the problem was registered, then the issues could and would be resolved:

> Amelioration of conditions must be due to the increased sense of responsibility on the part of the employer and improved habits of the employed... We have reason to believe that the present enquiry itself has not been without moral effect. And we believe that public attention and public judgement can effectively check operations in which little regard is shown to the welfare of the workpeople and to the quality of production, and can also strongly second the zealous and judicious efforts now being made to encourage thrift, promote temperance, improve dwellings and raise the tone of living.

These were their final words: the reform of working-class life was the solution.\(^{(215)}\)

During the debate on the Committee's recommendations, the Earl of Dunraven insisted that the implications of their evidence of 'the evils of homework' were not forgotten:

> The horrible insanitary conditions in which they work, the overcrowding in their dwellings... sleeping huddled up on the floor of the dilapidated room in which they live and work and die: the children sick of infectious diseases covered with half-finished clothing; destined to be distributed and to carry infections through all classes of society. \(^{(216)}\)

The Bishop of Ripon shared these fears:

> The evidence... presents pictures of deep distress; but beyond them lie threatenings of danger of a particular class... dangers which beset the community. I would call attention... to insanitary conditions [which] breed disease; clothing is infected by disease among the workers. This
danger itself is one reason for saying that something ought to be done... it may meet you in your own home however careful you may be. You may live where all the arrangements known to science give you entire security but it pursues you; it comes in the clothes. (217)

The Earl of Wemyss voiced fears about the violation of the privacy and sanctity of the home which would follow extension of factory and workshop legislation to private dwellings.(218)

However, some politicians felt that it would be expedient to implement some, if not all, of their Lordships' recommendations. On June 23rd 1890, Sydney Buxton,(219) Liberal MP for Poplar, Tower Hamlets, asked the First Lord of the Treasury Mr W.H. Smith: 'whether the Government have abandoned the idea of legislating this session in accordance with the suggestions in the Report of the Lords'. Smith replied that the Home Secretary was in the course of preparing a new Bill to amend existing factory law which, if agreed on, could be passed in the current Parliamentary session.(220)

The interest taken by Buxton and others sheds some light on the role played by MPs as individuals and as party members. In the 1880s the Conservative party were the traditional guardians of the established order, whereas the Liberals were the champions of individual freedom.(221) The nature of Liberalism at the end of the nineteenth century had an important bearing on the way they perceived and dealt with problems like poverty and sweated labour. Given its political ideology, the Liberal Government faced a dilemma on the extent of legislation. The significance of the concept of the social problem was that as it grew in size and scope, it challenged the style of government on which Liberalism was based. This lack of intervention was not in fact exceptional in an age dominated by 'laissez faire' approaches.(222)
The Press played its part. Ever since Henry Mayhew's Morning Chronicle articles on London's poor in the late 1840s and the early 1850s, newspapers had helped shape the poverty debate. The strength of political and public reaction to the publication of 'The Bitter Cry of Outcast London' ensured that social questions would be better and more fully reported than before. The Victorian press informed the politicians and the public what to think and what to talk about, and papers like The Times had a central role in informing civil servants. Indeed, party organisations were the main force in the explosion of the nineteenth century newspaper industry. Papers were established to influence different sections of the voting public. For example, The Globe and The Times were Conservative, and Reynold's and the Manchester Guardian were Liberal. Local newspapers such as the East London Observer and the East London Advertiser (which reported events in Spitalfields), gave their views on sweated labour and homework. These two papers had subtly different editorial positions on a range of social problems - the East London Observer was less conservative in its views than its strident rival, but they both welcomed the appointment of the Select Committees on Sweating and Alien Immigration in the late 1880s. Only the East End News, a local radical paper, presented a different view of national and local politics.

Periodicals and professional journals also condemned the situation revealed by the Sweating Committee, and demanded that Parliament act. The Graphic described their report: 'A sadder document has seldom been printed.' The Lancet congratulated itself on its role in raising the public's awareness, but criticised the recommendations for being framed 'with timidity and hesitation' and were disappointed that their Lordships would not implement the suggestions. The Lancet
had been discussing since it had first raised the matter in 1884. The critical issue for The Lancet was the risk to the purchaser of clothing made in 'fever dens'.

The politics of sweated labour and homework relate to broader political developments of the 1880s. During the decade there had been four changes of government; the Conservatives went out of office in 1880 after being in power for six years, and for the next five years there was a Liberal government; the Conservatives and the Liberals held power briefly from 1885 to 1886, and from 1886 to 1892 the Conservatives were in office. Thane points out that by 1890 it was obvious to politicians, civil servants and reformers, that there were a number of social problems, poverty, unemployment, housing, and public health, which, if left unchecked, could exacerbate existing social divisions. In-built Conservative and Liberal reluctance to extend expensive and intrusive central government activity which interfered with the life of the individual, was tempered with unease about Britain's place in the world, and a growing discomfort at the rise of her economic rivals, Germany and United States. Also, an increasingly vocal and unionised working-class provided another context for discussion of social issues. Economic depression had raised fears about imperialist rivalries. It was increasingly being pointed out that if planning in industry was seen to be a good thing, then it followed that it would also be beneficial to plan health, education and social organisation. The recent systematic accumulation of social facts could not be ignored. Charles Booth's survey, Fabian researches, Board of Trade statistics and the Lords Report on sweated labour all pointed to an impoverished, badly housed and unhealthy workforce. José Harris has observed that the Victorians' thirst for information and statistical
data was the bedrock of Liberal social reform. With regard to East End women's homework, the role and accumulation of information (beginning in the 1880s) was crucial to the politics of homework. The changing definitions of the problem were concomitant with the treatment and reception of the information gathered, which in turn influenced how government policy was constructed.

Riots of the unemployed in 1886 and 1887 worried the government, and the success of the Match Girls' Strike (1888) and the Dock Strike (1889) indicated a growing unity of unskilled labour. Increasingly, the middle-class conscience was uneasy about the condition of the working-class. The theories of Marx and Engels, articulated by William Morris's Socialist League and H.M. Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation, provided an environment of radical ideas.

By 1890 the middle-class had somewhat changed its attitudes to the poor. In the light of a growing body of empirical evidence, poverty, housing and labour were perceived under the umbrella term of 'social welfare' and measures to alleviate the worst problems were proposed, preferred as a lesser evil than revolutionary change. Coupled with, and central to, a political desire for solutions by way of voluntary action at local level rather than increased state interference, was greater knowledge of the various causes of poverty: the combination of unemployment and under-employment; old age; poor health and widowhood. By 1890 the state had started to legislate tentatively in a few areas: public works for the unemployed at specific times; elementary education was compulsory (and free in 1891) and workplaces were somewhat safer than in the past.
CHAPTER 2

THE HIDDEN WORKFORCE: DISCOVERING THE HOMEWORK PROBLEM

By 1890 existing factory and workshop legislation ensured that homeworkers were completely unregulated. To amend it by intruding into the private sphere of the home was felt to be politically damaging and administratively expensive. This chapter shows how the representation of homework as one of the 'dangerous trades' and as a cause of impaired motherhood, child neglect and endangered Empire, was constructed as a valuable weapon in the abolitionists' campaign for a radical change in the law. It was a period when the Women's Industrial Council and their political allies emerged as a pressure group which produced the first systematic survey of London's home industries. This work was to provide the foundation of legislative attempts to deal with the 'unmitigated evil'. (See Appendix I)

FACTORY AND WORKSHOP ACT OF 1891 - LOOPHOLES REGARDING HOMEWORKERS

The clamour to bring homeworkers under factory and workshop law, which was given a boost by the findings of the Lords Report, resulted in the Factory and Workshop Act of 1891. Homeworkers were immune from any regulation under the provisions of the 1878 Act. The new Act tried to monitor outworkers and homeworkers and their employers.
Section 27 dealt with homeworkers in a vague way, requiring employers to keep lists of their outworkers, in ambiguous wording:

The occupiers of every factory and workshop including any workshop conducted on the system of employing any child, young person or woman therein and every contractor employed by any such occupier in the business of the factory or workshop shall if so required by the Secretary of State by an order... keep in the prescribed form... lists showing the names of all persons directly employed by him either as workmen or as a contractor in the business of the factory or workshop and the places where they are employed and every such list shall be open to inspection by any inspection under the Principal Act or by any officer of a sanitary authority.

The penalties for contravention of this section of the Act were small: 'in the event of a contravention by the occupier of a factory or a workshop or by a contractor, the occupier or contractor shall be liable to a fine not exceeding forty shillings.'

A curious amendment was made to Section 31 of the 1878 Act: 'A place used solely as a dwelling shall not be deemed to form part of a factory or workshop for the purposes of this Act' was changed in the new Act to: 'a room solely used for the purposes of sleeping therein shall not be deemed to form part of the factory or workshop for the purposes of this Act'. This must have caused disquiet to those who were campaigning to abolish homework for public health reasons. Allowing rooms which were in effect bedrooms to be exempt seemed to be perpetuating the 'evil' of homework. The lurid examples cited in the 1880s did not influence this amendment, and so homework continued to be done in 'unsuitable' places and, further, this amendment appeared to be condoning it. Curiously, despite overwhelming public health worries, it was assumed (erroneously) that home workshops were sufficiently protected by existing Public Health Acts, and that if a house was good enough to live in then it was good enough to work in. As far as homeworkers were concerned, the new
Act placed the duty of compiling lists with their employers. Inspections were unlikely given the existence of only fifty-six factory inspectors to interpret and enforce the entire corpus of factory law for the United Kingdom. \(^3\)

There were logistical difficulties in enforcing this new Act. Up to 1891 factory legislation had had a 'tangled history' and the law had been 'tardy and dubious in dealing with... homework'. \(^4\) B.L. Hutchins, commenting in 1903, clarified the attitudes which lay behind the exclusion of home workshops in the 1891 Act, and the lack of political will to deal with homework. She maintained that:

It was easy to start a wave of popular sympathy with the underpaid and overworked but it was very difficult to utilise the sympathy in any practical reforms... as... public opinion was still unconverted as to the possibility of inspection or control of dwelling houses... [and] extremely nervous as to the economic effects of labour legislation on the workers themselves. \(^5\)

Economics and local politics played, Hutchins argued, a large part in the enforcement of the 1891 Act regarding homeworkers. The effect of this Act and the 1895 Factory and Workshop Act was patchy. Some progress was noted but there was a lack of will to bring all workplaces within the letter of the law:

The members of town councils are reluctant to make themselves obnoxious by interfering with their fellow townsmen and by raising rates for the payment of additional officials and the number of sanitary inspectors is seldom sufficiently large enough to allow of a systematic inspection of workshops where no special inspector has been appointed for the purpose. \(^6\)

The Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshop's description of the Act's first year are relevant to this study. He agreed with the objectives of the Act with regard to outworkers' lists but feared that the spirit of the Act would be compromised over its enforcement:

In some places the local authorities have met with the requirements of the Act in a liberal spirit and therewith the hearty cooperation of Her Majesty's Inspectors...
Elsewhere unfortunately they do not appear alive to their responsibilities and in this respect the Act remains to a great extent a dead letter.  

He was aware of its political importance: 'Public opinion has become and is becoming increasingly sensitive to the evils against which the state of inspection is aimed and proportionately vigilant and exacting as to the manner in which it is worked.'

THE ROLE OF THE SALVATION ARMY

William Booth and the Salvation Army waged their own war on the evils of 'Darkest England' - unemployment, drunkenness, prostitution and sweated labour. Booth had given evidence to the Lords Committee and his 'soldiers' had first-hand knowledge and experience of sweated labour. In his book In Darkest England and The Way Out, 1890, he proposed a range of remedies to deal with the 'submerged tenth', the poorest in the population. Sweated labour and homeworkers were of particular concern: 'We are endeavouring to raise the standard of labour and are pledged to wage a war to the death against sweating in every shape and form.' The Labour Shops they opened all over the country were to 'enable us to work out our Anti-Sweating experiments'; for example, matchbox-making, 'for which we shall aim at giving nearly treble the amount at present paid to the poorest starving creatures engaged in this work'. In the summer of 1890 they had opened their first 'Elevator' in the heart of Spitalfields, at 159 Hanbury Street, and another one in the following spring in nearby Fieldgate Street. The 'Elevators' practised a range of local industries including some of the most notoriously sweated, viz,
Their views on sweated labour were unequivocal:

Let us end once and for all the devil's lie that a man has a right to buy in the cheap market. He has not if it means the tears and the life of women and children... For years our slum officers had found that the most miserable of all workpeople... were the matchbox-makers.

Whether East End women matchbox-makers worked in the Army's new factory in Bow, or worked in their own homes, the rates of pay were comparatively generous. They earned four pence a gross and glue and string were provided, whereas their neighbours only earned two pence half-penny a gross, and provided their own glue and string. The Social Wing's rates of pay allowed these homeworkers: 'a few hours to keep their homes decently comfortable'. Salvation Army publications such as War Cry, The Darkest England Gazette and The Deliverer were the mouthpieces of their anti-sweating campaign which included regular features on sweated labour. Copy for the advertisements for their own brand of matches put their anti-sweating message across at an emotional level. One design asked 'Why should you buy the Army matches?' and answered: 'First, to raise the wages of the matchbox-maker; second, to fight against sweating, and thirdly, to help the poor to help themselves by labour.' Another urged consumers to: 'Help to Make Happier Homes and To Pay Highest Wages, Also to Maintain Healthy Factories and To Support Real HOME INDUSTRIES.' The Salvation Army were just one of a burgeoning group of individuals and organisations whose attitudes and activities influenced the homework debate. Their various work schemes came under frequent attacks during the 1890s from trade unionists like Lewis Lyons who accused them of sweating the people they employed and of undermining the struggle to improve wages and conditions which was only possible by organised union activity.
THE ROLE OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION

The Lancet maintained its interest in 'The Sweating Question' throughout the 1890s, and claimed the subject as its own, asserting its prime role in alerting the public to the dangers that homeworkers posed to health:

Under what conditions... can the manufacture of trousers be conducted when such articles of apparel can be produced for three shillings and six pence a pair? Imagination revolts at the picture of squalor, wretchedness and filth with their accompaniments of disease, implied by such surroundings as must necessarily be attendant on work so inadequately remunerated. (16)

The British Medical Journal pointed out a loophole in the Act which ensured that many homeworkers' employers could easily evade the compiling of lists:

There is no similar power over warehousemen so that if a man chooses to refrain entirely from having any work done on his own premises, he may give out material to outworkers who may take it home... without ever being placed on a list or coming under the ken of the sanitary authorities. (17)

In 1893 the Chief Inspector of Factories blamed overworked Medical Officers of Health and the reluctance of local authorities to increase local rates bills by appointing sufficient inspectors, to properly execute the terms of the Act. (18)

The workload of Medical Officers of Health like Dr Loane in Spitalfields gave little time for the compilation of outworkers' lists. In late 1892 he noted that there was no smallpox in the area, more scarlet fever and diphtheria and less cholera than in recent years. (19) His 'Sanitary Works' that year would certainly have made local dwellings cleaner and safer if they were places used for homeworking: 2,758 were specially visited under the terms of the 1875 Public Health Act; 1,160 rooms were 'disinfected with sulphurous acid
gas after the occurrence of infectious diseases' and 33,227 'articles of beds, bedding, clothing etc were removed and disinfected'.

The 1891 Act must have been greeted with dismay by Loane and his colleagues throughout the country. He tactfully reminded readers of his report of his enormous task and made a plea for more staff and support from central government.

Given the role played by medical journalism, and the work of Medical Officers of Health, it is appropriate to briefly describe the increased professionalism of nineteenth century medicine. By the 1890s doctors were an established professional body and had distanced themselves from unorthodox practices. Their growing involvement with the activities and policies of the State were fundamental breaks with their eighteenth century predecessors who had enjoyed a patient-dominated relationship, tailoring their theories and remedies to meet the expectations and requirements of their genteel clients. From the early nineteenth century developments in medical knowledge helped to produce a shift in the balance between the doctor and the patient. Between 1794 and 1858, the 'Age of Medical Reform', the rank and file of the profession, the surgeon-apothecaries, changed from being an undifferentiated mass of often badly-educated practitioners, to being respectable, scientifically trained and organised with a considerable degree of public status and esteem.

The general structure of the medical profession as it exists today was broadly in place in the mid-nineteenth century, its system was confirmed by the 1858 Medical Act which created a single medical register and established the General Medical Council to oversee education and licensing. At the same time the British Medical Association became the doctors' public voice. The Medical Act Amendment Act of 1886 further professionalised medicine by requiring
compulsory examinations in its three main branches of medicine, surgery and midwifery, and this in turn differentiated their status with regard to their potential clientele. By the end of the century it was a doctor-dominated system, although at general practitioner level the changes were more indeterminate, and the changes in their status took longer. Doctors did not generally come from the upper ranks of society, and were often the sons of lower middle-class tradesmen, craftsmen and clerks. Thomas Wakley of The Lancet was such an example - his father was a Devon farmer. Only 31% of the Fellows of the Royal College of Surgeons of 1800-1889 could be classified as 'gentlemen'. As a profession it was overstocked and general practitioners often had to take on duties as Poor Law Medical Officers to make ends meet. The Medical Officers of Health, first appointed in 1848, and compulsorily appointed by all local sanitary authorities from 1872 onwards, remained the Cinderellas of the medical profession well into the twentieth century.

From the 1830s onwards surveys, investigations and statistics had revealed the extent of the nation's health problems. Victorian public health reform, founded on such data, was fuelled by motives of fear and guilt. Epidemics could spread from working-class slums to middle-class districts with frightening speed. But sanitary reform went further than this, and the public health campaigns of the nineteenth century were also moral and scientific crusades. The outcry against homework is a case in point.

Medical journalism of the 1890s exploited the growing volume of writings of urban explorers to explain doctors' fears and to justify medical demands. The sensational journalism of the 1880s built on similar writings of the 1830s and 1840s to underpin zeal for medical and moral reform. By the 1880s there were two Londons,
the West End of London which was 'good' and the East End of London which was 'bad'. These impressionistic accounts did not take root in a vacuum. They were responses to the political uncertainties and tensions of the decade. Religious doubt, social unrest, anxiety about national and imperial decline and an echo of the public school emphasis on physical manliness, were major ingredients in a powerful cocktail of concerns which gnawed at upper- and middle-class and confidence and insecurities. Peter Keating has described the 1880s as 'the high noon of imperialism and class fear'. Just as the sanitary reformers of the 1830s and 1840s had used fear to promote interest in and support for their own cause, the same energy and moral zeal was channelled into The Lancet's and others' campaigns against homework.

The crisis in confidence in the late Eighties which fed these anxieties was due to the effects of the Great Depression of the middle years of the decade, and the consequent decline in middle-class prosperity. London's traditional industries, for example, shipbuilding, garment-making and boot and shoe-making, faced serious competition from the provinces. Economic competition from Germany and the United States combined to produce a profound sense of malaise and degeneration. London, and especially the East End of London's concentration of allegedly dangerous homeworkers on its own doorstep, seemed to embody all that was wrong with Britain and her relations with her own people and the rest of the world. The real and imagined physical degeneration of the East End was used to describe Britain's less than sure position on the international stage.

The 'Bitter Cry of Outcast London' and George Sims' writings at the beginning of the decade, seemed, on reflection in 1890, to have
been prophetic of the future. The turbulent years of 1886-1890, the riots - of unemployed East Enders in Pall Mall in 1886, heightened tension and seemed to be the precursor to revolution. 'Bloody Sunday' in Trafalgar Square followed in November 1887 and further exacerbated fears. Civil servants and politicians, informed by newspapers like the Pall Mall Gazette, had to come to terms with the existence of degraded living and working conditions on their doorstep. Similar conditions prevailed in other parts of London, and in towns and cities throughout the United Kingdom, but Whitechapel and Spitalfields were the focus of concern. Fears of the East End and its inhabitants prompted investigations into the conditions there, and possible causes. The picture which emerged was of most overcrowded and insanitary living and working conditions, declining male employment, and an alarming concentration of the sweated trades. It took the influx of Eastern European Jews into Whitechapel in the mid 1880s to fully expose the poverty which had existed for many years, and was not just a phenomenon of that decade. The Match Girls' Strike of 1888 and the 'Great Dock Strike' of 1889, both local East London strikes, but with far reaching national implications, gave the semi-skilled and unskilled workers, both male and female, a voice to be heard for the first time. The relations between capital and labour would never be the same again, and would always be informed to some extent by these landmark strikes. The demonstrations and strikes confirmed the worst fears of the middle-class. The underclass, it seemed, were mobilised and ready to overthrow the government.

The late 1880s, argues Judith Walkowitz in her recent City of Dreadful Delight (1992), saw the elision of a complex set of socio-economic and political factors which caused the spotlight to be shone
on the East End. The slow burning fuse of interest and exposé had assumed a dazzling brightness. If the East End was the metaphor that journalists and the medical profession said it was, then not only London, but the country and the Empire were threatened by the conditions of life, work, and political agitation that seemed to be woven into its fabric. The causes of concern were: contagious diseases; despair at the worsening social conditions, the growing militancy of working-class movements; public disorder and strikes and fear of revolution. All were present in the East End. London's last rookery in Flower and Dean Street, Whitechapel, which had stood until 1886, remained a potent symbol which could not be easily erased. Even with the destruction of this embodiment of degeneration, events and reports would allow no pause in the escalation of middle-class tension and anxiety which would find such a powerful support in the medical profession and its public voices, The Lancet and The British Medical Journal.

THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR: 1891-1894

In 1891 the Royal Commission on Labour was appointed to:

inquire into the questions affecting the relations between employers and employed and the conditions of labour which have been raised during recent trade disputes in the United Kingdom, and to report whether legislation can with advantage be directed to the remedy of any evils that may be disclosed and if so in what manner.

Worried by the riots of the unemployed in the mid and late 1880s, the contemporary strikes in London and throughout the United Kingdom and the rapidly deteriorating relationship between 'Capital and Labour', (the title of The Times' weekly column on industrial unrest) the Conservative government appointed a Royal Commission to investigate

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the situation. They were sufficiently concerned to appoint the Duke of Devonshire, \(^{(47)}\) one of the most important Liberals, as its Chairman. Known in the 1880s as Lord Hartington, he was the leader of the moderate wing of the party, often quarrelling with the radical element as represented by Sir Charles Dilke. Devonshire had been reluctant to extend the franchise and was wholly opposed to Home Rule for Ireland. In 1886 he became the leader of the new alliance of Conservatives and Liberal Unionists and, not wanting to split the party irrevocably, he turned down three requests to form a government. Thus the Commission was chaired by a highly experienced traditional Liberal, rather than a reforming, radical politician. He was also well versed in the procedures and purposes of such forums, as in 1890, at the age of fifty-eight, just prior to becoming the eighth Earl of Devonshire, he chaired another royal commission which investigated the civil and professional administration of the Navy and Army and their relationship with the Treasury.

The setting up of this investigation pleased Lady Emilia Dilke\(^{(43)}\). In 1885 she had married Sir Charles Dilke who shared her worries on a wide range of social issues. She welcomed any legislation which would help preserve the sanctity of the home, the health of women workers, and safeguard the future health of Britain's and the Empire's assets - its children. Hers was an early articulation of the creed of Motherhood, Race and Empire:

I am not desirous ergo for restriction by law... All that I am pleading for is such a searching inquiry as may show us how their industries, whether at home or in the factory, affect their lives physically and morally and the results... which may put us in the way of devising such amelioration of their conditions as may enable them to work honourably without danger to themselves and their little ones - for dangers to our workers and their children is ruin to the very foundation of our national greatness. \(^{(44)}\)
During the three year long proceedings of the Royal Commission, further disclosures on homework were made by witnesses who were known for their knowledge of, and opinions about, this work. During 1892 Charles Booth and Sidney Webb\(^{45}\) gave their views. Webb, who had recently married Beatrice Potter, was a well-known member of, and propagandist for, The Fabian Society, and was the Progressive Member for Deptford on the London County Council. He demanded that homework be better regulated:

> If we want to raise the East of London to the same high level as Lancashire we had better follow the lessons of history which Lancashire gives us; and get a Factory Act as well adapted to the industries and circumstances of East London... and the most important thing... I think is to secure the legal responsibility of the owner of the tenement workshop and the legal responsibility of the giver-out of work in order to put a check upon the evils of homework.\(^{46}\)

Factories, he argued, were the best places for any kind of work. Although he wanted to see it 'cease altogether' he was not 'suggesting that an Act of Parliament should... be passed abolishing homework'. Safeguarding the public's health was the core of his objection: 'I think that the method of employment which admits of women and other persons working in their small tenement bedrooms is a very bad one, and I should wish to check that in every possible way.' If indeed homework was to continue then their employers should be made responsible for ensuring that the work was completed in clean and healthy rooms. Webb expressed traditional male trade unionist views about working women: 'I am very loth to see mothers of families working... at all... I would much prefer to bring about a condition of society in which the mother of a family did not work at all.'\(^{47}\)

Charles Booth's evidence was a development of his views of the late 1880s. He was still concerned about homework,\(^{48}\) but his earlier strident tone is missing. Now he was of the opinion that it
had certain benefits: 'Such work seems to be socially beneficial and I can see no way to improve the conditions under which it is done except by general improvement in the condition of life.' (49) He advocated a mixed economy which accommodated better-regulated factories and workshops and a tolerance for homework providing it was carried out in clean and wholesome dwellings, and was reluctant to abolish it by law: 'I think that would be a very great hardship, and a great evil and I believe that the results we want can be got... without incurring that evil.' (50) Almost for the first time homeworkers received compassionate comments from an influential participant in the debate - Clara Collet:

They are individuals deserving of consideration... it would be a very great hardship... a hardship that one should have no right to impose upon them. I think it is very desirable for them... and for the community, desirable in every way for them to get work. (51)

Collet's evidence presented useful ammunition for those few supporters of women's homework. She was a knowledgeable witness, having been an assistant on Booth's survey and was one of the Lady Assistant Commissioners appointed by the Royal Commission to gather material on women's work. She made the important point that homework was not only the refuge of the poorest and most unskilled women - genteel lower middle-class and middle-class women also did it. Collet's comments challenged the current views about homeworkers and added to the body of knowledge about the genteel poverty of the lower middle-class which necessitated women doing this work. (52)

Homeworkers were the subjects of a great deal of opprobrium when the Royal Commission's final report was published in 1894. This mode of production and its workers were portrayed as fossils and failures from a by-gone age: 'Work and reasonable rates of pay are no longer to be had in them and the workers as a body are too shiftless and
feeble to abandon the occupations to which they are accustomed to seek employment elsewhere."

The four specially appointed Lady Assistant Commissioners, Misses Orme, Collet, Abraham and Irwin produced seventeen reports on women's labour, including homework. These appointments were an important step in May Abraham's campaign to get women appointed as factory inspectors, which became successful in 1893. The changes reflected an increasingly widely held view that there was no other area 'in which they [the new female factory inspectors] could be more usefully used or fruitfully employed than in looking after the health and the industrial conditions under which their fellow women labour in the factories and workshops'. Homework was a serious problem in the considered view of the four 'Ladies':

"The fundamental cause of the exceptional degradation of these trades [home industries] is that we are convinced the prevalence amongst them of the giving out of work to be done at the workers' own homes. Whilst not recommending the actual prohibition of homework, we regard it of the utmost importance that every practicable means should be employed against its extension."

They did not recommend abolition, but urged better protective legislation for homeworkers and called on the Government to give them 'the promptest attention' and 'carry still further its crusade against sweating'.

Reviewing their material the Chairman identified East London homeworkers as a scourge:

"A serious endeavour should be made by the Government to raise the East London trouser-finisher or fur-puller to the level of the Lancashire mill worker. We do not propose any special legislation for women... though much may be hoped from the spread of trade unionism among women workers... their only hope lies in the extension of collective action by the State... the gradual supercession of homework by the factory system."
These remarks need setting in a political context. The early 1890s saw the mobilisation of public and political opinion on the employment of women and girls in 'the dangerous trades', industries such as matchmaking (phossy-jaw), the potteries (lead poisoning) and fur-pulling (chest infections) were identified as extremely harmful to mothers' and in turn infant health. Throughout the decade, a number of home industries were also identified as dangerous. The focus of the debate shifted noticeably from concern about the danger that homework posed to the public's health, to the perils of homework for the female worker who was polluting her home and her offspring. The public's attention was engaged at this level throughout the 1890s as the health issues of the previous decade were woven into a closer concern for the well-being of women workers themselves.

Significantly, the Lady Assistant Commissioners' task had been to clarify: 'the effect of women's industrial employment on their health, their morality and the home'. Homeworkers presented a special set of problems: 'The effect produced on the health and homes of the married women who are engaged in home industries is a far-reaching and difficult question.'

Many visits had been made by the Ladies: 'the homes were miserable and the physique of the women bad', although they were aware of the ability of the homeworkers to supervise their children while they were earning money, which was preferred to women leaving their homes all day: 'It [homework] is at any rate the lesser of the two evils', but 'safe generalisations' were said to be 'difficult'.

The Commissioners' attitudes to married women working reflected the view that a women's place was in the home, in a non wage-earning capacity: 'Economic advantage must frequently be balanced with social disadvantage and there is a general consensus of opinion that the
effect on the life of the family must be the test of the goodness or
badness of the economic conditions so far as women are
concerned. ('61')

THE 'TREACHEROUS GROUND': THE CASE FOR 'FAIR WAGES'

During the early part of the 1890s the Government responded by moving
towards eliminating sweating and homework in their own contracts.
Some of the very few surviving Cabinet Papers of this period show
evidence of a perceived need to respond politically to the 1890s
Lords Report and to the House of Lords Resolution of February 13th
1891:

That in the opinion of this House, it is the duty of the
Government in all government contracts to make provision
against the evils recently disclosed... to insert such
conditions as may prevent the abuse arising from sub-
letting; to make every effort to secure the payment of wages
as are generally accepted as current in each trade for
competent workmen. ('62')

The subject was raised in the House of Commons in March 1893 by
Colonel Howard Vincent ('63) [Conservative MP for Sheffield Central].
Sydney Buxton, ('64) [Liberal MP for Poplar, Tower Hamlets], Under
Secretary of State for the Colonies, assured him that the Government
was doing all it could to carry out the 1891 Resolution, and had even
gone beyond its spirit: 'As regards Public Departments the working
out of the Resolution is fraught with the many difficulties although
it seems simple enough in itself. Many of the departments have met
the principle of this Resolution in a very friendly spirit and have
carried it out in a way that the House of Commons desires that it
should be carried out.' ('65)
However the evidence which survives suggests a desire to avoid the charges of using sweated labour and homeworkers, but no serious will to legislate for 'fair wages'. It was deemed political suicide and too great a concession to 'the demands of Socialists and Socialism'. On several counts the use of sweated labour and the implementation of a 'fair wages' policy were politically sensitive. In a Confidential Report by the Director of Contracts to the War Office, dated November 26th 1895, George Lansdowne commented on remarks made in the debate on the use of sweated labour in Army Contracts in the House of Commons the previous summer:

The War Office is much concerned with such questions and our experience will be of use to others.' Afraid of the escalation of power of trade union leaders: 'A surrender of this kind... is made use of by the trades for the purpose of extorting further concession... it seems to me that both in the interests of the tax-payer and in order to avoid being led onto treacherous ground, we should be extremely careful how we advance further in the direction to which the House of Commons Resolution... points. No one department would I venture to think be justified in taking a fresh step independently of the rest; what is yielded or refused by one should be yielded or refused by all.

For him, homework was at the core of the sweating question:

The term 'sweating' is admittedly a vague one, but its general meaning is I think understood; in a restricted sense it applies more particularly to cases where contracts are sub-let to middlemen who thus intervene between the employer and the employed, which cases chiefly arise where the latter work in their own homes.

He insisted that his department had attempted to deal with the problem of the use of homeworkers in Government contracts well before the 1891 Resolution. The principles of War Office Contracts required that the work should be done in factories, no middlemen should be allowed where it was not customary, and the wages paid were 'generally accepted as current in each trade in the district'. In advance of any criticism Lansdowne defensively explained:

While carrying out the terms of the... Resolution I have endeavoured not to do anything which would involve us in a
detailed investigation and discussion of points which were being enquired into by the Labour Commission... I frankly admit I have no special training or fitness for discussing and settling such labour questions. They have been added to a branch already one of the most heavily worked in the War Office."

WORKING MOTHERS AND INFANT MORTALITY

During the 1890s there was close scrutiny of married women's work. It was not a new interest for middle-class observers - the debate on the effects of married women's work and infant mortality dates from the 1840s and 1850s when female Lancashire textile workers were criticised for their insistence on going out to work and women were banned from underground work at coal mines. From the mid 1870s there had been considerable unease about the falling birth rate which was noted in the 1881 Census, and in subsequent reports of the Registrar-General. This concern about the birth rate identified children as national and imperial assets. By 1899 the national infant mortality rate was 163 per thousand live births and the highest rates were among the poorest in the population. Since the 1850s these figures had been seen as a bench-mark of the general sanitary condition of the nation. By the 1890s there was a greater involvement by Medical Officers of Health in monitoring the public's health at the local level and closer scrutiny of their infant mortality rates. The reports of Spitalfields' Doctor Loane bear witness to this growing concern. In the 1890s, for the first time, officially sanctioned leaflets on infant care were distributed among working-class mothers.

There was a shared objective to reduce the high levels of infant mortality and to improve the race in the early 1880s. The word
'eugenics', 'the production of fine offspring by improvement of inherited qualities', was first coined in 1883 by Francis Galton, influenced by his cousin Charles Darwin's theories. The Social Darwinists, environmental reformers, Fabians and Liberal Imperialists were concerned about the future of a race which ruled a worldwide Empire. It was in this intellectual atmosphere that the debate on the causes of high rates of infant mortality took place in the 1890s. Galton and Karl Pearson, the luminaries of the eugenics movement, rejected the ideas of environmental reformers. For them, racial progress and lower rates of infant mortality, would be found in nature, not nurture. Eugenics developed within a particular socio-economic and political framework - the perception that Britain was slipping as a world power and Anglo-German economic rivalry. Since the 1880s the goal for many different groups, not just the eugenicists, was 'National Efficiency', via the arrest of Britain's economic decline. Some, like the Liberal Imperialists, urged better housing, education and temperance reform to achieve this goal. Between 1876 and 1897 general mortality decreased; in 1876 it was 21 per thousand, in 1897 it was 17.4 per thousand. The infant mortality rate was 146 per thousand in 1876, and in 1897 it was 153 per thousand. From 1888 the Registrar-General's Reports on infant deaths showed that the first three months of life held the highest mortality. Between 1888 and 1901 these figures showed an overall increase of 6-8% in infant mortality in the first three months of life. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century fewer babies were being born and more of those who were born were dying. The concern about infant mortality was widespread, non party political, and not solely from the eugenics camp. (70)
Homeworkers were bitterly criticised for their responsibility for the condition of the nation's assets; its infants and children. Once they were defined as the leading players in the disintegration of the home: family life; mothercraft; the race, and the Empire, homeworkers remained blamed until the outbreak of the First World War. The medical profession was at the forefront of criticism of any mother who worked, whether it was in a factory, a workshop or in her own home, and played a key role in raising and sustaining political awareness. In November 1894 a deputation from the British Medical Association's Parliamentary Bills Committee visited Home Secretary H.H. Asquith and expressed concern at the current rates of infant mortality which was blamed on the employment of women in factories. Asquith was not convinced by their arguments, although he did say: 'that they might live to see the time when the employment of married women in factories... would be entirely discontinued whether by the operation of the law or by that of public opinion'. The political and financial cost of legislating women out of their role as breadwinners was understood by Asquith. The cost of intervention with the individual's life on this scale, and perhaps more relevantly, the increased burden on the local poor rates, financed by local residents, was too high. Ultimately, children could become even more disadvantaged:

'If the woman was compelled to ... not earn wages... the family was very little removed from the poorest class, the withdrawal of so much from the weekly wage meant a withdrawal from the small comforts in the way of food... so that they would have a badly nourished woman and it might be that the nutrient given to the child under such circumstances would be very far from being advantageous to it... It would be a very undesirable thing to produce the feelings that a child was rather an obstacle.

He agreed that the primary consideration ought to be the health of the mother and the child."
Children with working mothers and the implications for the nation was the social policy topic of the decade. The situation was grave enough for Gertrude Tuckwell, of the WTUL to express tough, conservative views:

The tendency of competition which has flooded the market with women's cheap labour has been attended with this disastrous consequence, that in thousands of working-class families it has diverted the mother's attention from the supervision of her home... the wisest solution of such a phenomenon as this lies surely in the gradual extension of labour protection till it shall restore the child to its home; the prohibition of the labour of mothers of families until these children shall have arrived at an age to care for themselves.

'IN DEFENCE OF HOMEWORK'

There was one serious apologist for homeworkers in the 1890s, Ada Heather-Bigg, Honorary Secretary of the Women's Industrial Defence Committee. Her spirited 'In Defence of Homework' refused to portray them as feeble and passive victims and denied that homes and homelife were being sacrificed and neglected: 'When the mother engages at home in tasks similar to those of the factory hand, she is nonetheless performing her domestic duties.' She maintained that criticism 'breaks down in every particular'. It was not forced on reluctant women - they chose to do it: it was the easiest way for wives and mothers to earn money; it was wrong to assume that they all worked long hours for starvation wages in insanitary conditions; it was better for women to do homework than factory work; there was no proof that they undercut factory workers, and any attempt at prohibiting homework would only change the competition, and not eliminate it.
Her work was complemented by the aims and objectives of a sister organisation, The Women's Employment Defence League, which campaigned against any labour legislation which targeted women, and utterly opposed any attempts to make it more difficult for women to do homework. In 1895 they stated: 'The time has gone for laws to be passed saying what women should not do... no restrictions at all should be imposed on women.' (78)

TRYING TO CLOSE THE LOOHOLES - THE FACTORY AND WORKSHOP ACT OF 1895

One important consequence of the evidence presented by the six hundred witnesses to the Royal Commission on Labour was the recognition of the need to strengthen the 1891 Factory and Workshop Act with regard to homeworkers. The four Lady Assistant Commissioners and the two newly appointed female factory inspectors urged the extension of local authorities' responsibilities for the sanitary inspection of workshops as well as greater powers to regulate homework by new factory legislation. (79) Hence, the 1895 Factory and Workshop Act's attempt to legislate for inspection of 'The Home', specifically outworkers and homeworkers currently beyond the scope of factory law. Section 27 of the 1891 Act was amended to make the collation and inspection of outworkers' lists more effective. Section 42 of the new Act insisted that:

1. Every occupier of a factory or workshop to whom Section 27 of the 1891 Act for the time being applies, and every contractor employed by any such occupier in the business of the factory and workshop, shall on or before 1st March and 1st September in each year send to the inspector for the district in which the factory or workshop is situated a list showing the names of all persons directly employed by him, either as a workman or contractor in the business of the factory or workshop and the places where they are employed and in default of so doing shall be liable to a fine not exceeding twenty shillings; and 2. Section 27 of the Act of
1891 and this Section 42 shall apply to any place from which any work of making wearing apparel for sale is given to every contractor employed by an such occupier in connection with the said work as if that place were a workshop.

It was now obligatory for employers to send lists to factory inspectors who in turn dealt with the local Medical Officers of Health. 

Safeguarding the public's health was clearly a major concern of the Act, which tried to reduce the risk of consumers catching infectious diseases from clothing made in dirty places. Section 6 stated:

If any occupier of a factory or workshop... or any place from which any work is given out, or any contractor employed by any such occupier, causes or allows wearing apparel to be made, cleaned, repaired, in any dwelling house or building occupied therewith whilst any inmate of the dwelling house is suffering from scarlet fever or smallpox, then unless he proves that he was not aware of the existence of the illness in the dwelling house and could not reasonably have been expected to become aware of it, he shall be liable to a fine not exceeding ten pounds.

The Act also called for local authorities to appoint women sanitary inspectors to inspect the workshops and private dwellings where women worked. The statistical data they gathered would form part of the growing body of knowledge about homeworkers which informed the campaigners in the post 1900 period.

In May 1895 The Women's Employment Defence League accompanied a deputation of working women who gave their views on the new Act to Mr. Russell, the Under Secretary of State for the Home Department. They opposed it because it hindered homework and limited women's overtime. Russell insisted that Home Secretary Asquith 'did not want to hamper women in their struggle for life... neither did he wish to... interfere with homework or home industries'. He wanted to make their working conditions more healthy and:
He [Asquith] thought it would not be good for women, or for children, or for the public who wore the things which they produced, [and] that the work should be done under healthy conditions. Everyone knew that disease had been constantly spread by the making of wearing apparel in places where scarlet fever or other illnesses were prevalent and the object of the Bill was to give the Secretary of State power to prevent work being done in such unhealthy places. ("a")

THE ABOLITION CAMPAIGN

Those in the medical profession who wanted homework abolished received the support of two authors in the mid 1890s. J.A. Hobson's, *The Problems of Poverty* proposed abolition because it conflicted with a woman's duties in the home and caused her to neglect her children and undermined her own health. He argued that the mobilisation of public opinion against working mothers was imperative and a more potent force than legislative change: ("a")

'The education of a strong popular sentiment against the propriety of industrial labour of married women would not only be practicable, but highly desirable. Such a public sentiment would not at first operate so stringently as to interfere in those exceptional cases where it seems an absolute necessity that the wife should aid, by her home or factory work, the family. ("a")

The creed of Motherhood, Race and Empire was central to his concern and informed his position and the stance of other abolitionists:

Surely from the large stand-point of true national economy no wiser use could be made of the vast expansion of wealth power of the nation... than to secure for every woman destined to become a wife and mother that relief from physical strain or industrial toil which shall enable her to bring forth healthy offspring and to employ her time and attention in... the ordering of a cleanly and wholesome peaceful home life. So long as public opinion permits or even encourages women who either are or will be mothers to neglect the preparations... and the performance of the duties of domestic life and of maternity by engaging in the laborious and unhealthy industrial occupations, so long shall we pay the penalty in that physical and moral deterioration of the race which we have traced in low city life. ("a")
In her book *Rich and Poor*, Mrs Bosanquet, a keen abolitionist, called homework 'an unmitigated evil'. She was an important figure in charity circles who deplored mothers who earned a living and criticised the effect that homework had on the family. She confidently stated that the 'inevitable results' were 'neglected homes and ailing children' and painted a picture of the disastrous effects on the homes:

You will frequently find a woman and her children around a small dirty window with their fingers flying as if their lives depended on it as indeed in a certain sense they do. You will also find the remains of breakfast littered about the room (probably on the bed as the table is in use), the children unwashed, unmended, half-clad, the floor black with the dirt of weeks, the marks of neglect and misery wherever you go.

Others agreed with her and even suggested that marriages could founder because of homework:

Women who work at home... are compelling them [their husbands] to seek elsewhere for the comfort and rest they should find at home... Women who are too proud to go out to work should be compelled to live and die upon what their pride can obtain.

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**THE WOMEN'S INDUSTRIAL COUNCIL AND THE HOMEWORK PROBLEM**

The first detailed investigation of London's home industries was completed by the Women's Industrial Council in 1897. Formed out of the Women's Trade Union Association in 1894, they were absorbed into one organisation in 1897. The WTUA, who had tried for several years to organise working women into trade unions but with very little success, now decided that the formation of recreational clubs, training women in certain skilled jobs and campaigning for legislative change was the way forward. The core of their earliest work was 'special and systematic enquiry into the conditions of working...
women'. The first was on London's home industries, published in 1897. Their Investigation Committee studied thirty-five trades, ranging from artificial flower-making to umbrella-making. Clementina Black and Margaret MacDonald, wife of the politician Ramsay MacDonald, a woman who had come to this work via social work and evangelicalism in the East End of London, were in charge of the study of four hundred homeworkers. Its aim was to 'set forth afresh, in some detail, the plain facts of the destitute life about us which we well know but fail to realise'. They located homeworkers within 'the poorest stratum of the population... jammed between famine and the workhouse... How long the starvation work is to go on is a question for the public conscience.' The results were presented in tabular form dealing with separate trades, seven of which were closely investigated and special reports were written on Southwark and two Spitalfields' neighbourhoods, Bethnal Green and Shoreditch. The investigators were shocked by the conditions they found and the 'utter drudgery of their lives... in some cases floor and tables are piled up high with boxes and bundles so that there is little room for anything else'. The women who did this work were so oppressed by it they were unable to demand better pay. If they did complain the foreman told them 'to take it or leave it - others will take it if you refuse'. Shoreditch homeworkers' lives were dominated by: 'constant grind and uncertainty, a want of pride in their work and the sacrifice of all home comfort and orderliness'.

The tabulated data they published provides useful information about individual rates of pay; the deductions made for materials; hours worked; the condition of the women and the prejudices of the investigators. Value judgements include: 'slovenly, possibly
drinks'; 'dirty and untidy'; 'clean widow'; 'respectable, clean widow'; 'a heap of children'; 'very poor' and 'clean and contented'. The case studies which formed the basis of this investigation were confidential and no personal details are given. The Women's Industrial Council was primarily concerned with the effect that homework had on the homes and families where it was done. Their subjects fell into two categories, either, good, sober, clean, poor and respectable; or dirty, slovenly and often with a drink problem.

At their conference at the London School of Economics that autumn, the chief objection to homework was that it 'prevented any real home life'. Speakers deplored the danger that fur-pulling posed to the worker and her family, and urged the government to prohibit this form of homework in private dwellings and to introduce legislation which brought all places where any kind of manual work was done within its scope. Just two years later, in 1899, the Women's Industrial Council succeeded in getting a Bill which they had drafted with the Glasgow Council for Women's Trades discussed in the House of Commons. Its aim was:

- to protect the public against the dissemination of dirt and disease by wearing apparel and other articles made in insanitary dwellings and to protect the workers themselves against unhealthy and vicious conditions over which they can exercise no control.

It did not set out any new standards of sanitation but, instead tried 'to correct many of the admitted failures in the administration of these (existing) Acts'.

They proposed licensing of the rooms where homework was done. Licences were to be granted to individuals for specified premises and for a limited period of time in order to prevent sub-letting and the sale of certificates. The onus of obtaining the license was to be
placed on the homeworker, whereas the responsibility of ensuring
certificates were valid was devolved on to the employer or his agent.
Inspection of premises was to be undertaken by Factory Inspectors
rather than local Sanitary Inspectors who, it was felt, were not
independent. So grave was the situation that 'The Home' was to be
thrown open to the scrutiny of paid strangers. The supporters of the
Bill were optimistic about its effect on homework: 'it will not put
an end to homework - it will organise it'. The Bill did not become
law.  

By 1899 the Women's Industrial Council's homework campaign was
focused on the presumed damage it was doing to homes and especially
motherhood. They had been shaken by their own revelations about the
'terrible heritage handed onto the future through the present
conditions of child life among homeworkers'. The freedom that
some young women who did this kind of work enjoyed was also deplored
by the Council, who implied that it made men work-shy. 'The Home'
had been undermined irrevocably: 'all comfort is very much impaired
by it, if not totally destroyed... the home is often reduced to a
shelter. The cooking is all done in the public bake-house and the
supplies of food... are doled out in an extravagant and wasteful
manner... all attempts at mending are rare and good mending is never
in evidence'. The long term aim was to gradually legislate
homework out of existence.

The Council, a product of the radical, socialist environment in
London which dated from the 1880s, was a pressure group to influence
public opinion to overcome 'masculine indifference to women's
interests'. Their ideas were shaped by nineteenth century
conceptions of women's roles and working-class life, and not solely
by feminist ideals, although they preached a brand of social
feminism. The leaders and members were 'the voice of the enlightened radical, labourite and Fabian middle-class' and its feminism was shaped by contemporary ideologies of women, the hearth and the home, which helps explain why they adopted their stance on homework. The 1897 study became the core of their campaign 'to solve the problem of homework'.

The activities and success rate of the Women's Trade Union League among homeworkers are a footnote to the results achieved by the Women's Industrial Council. Always short of money, the League prioritised women factory workers who were easier to organise. This is not to say that homework was not a concern of theirs - it was; they were just as fearful of the disastrous effects it was alleged to have on mothers, children, homes and the future of the Empire. The unions of East End Tailoresses, Fur-Pullers, Boxmakers, Brush-makers, Milliners, Cigar-Makers and Dressmakers were all engaged in a fight to survive, and less likely be in the position of reporting significant numbers of recruits among their homeworking colleagues. They agreed with the Women's Industrial Council's view that new legislation was the key to the serious problems that homeworkers posed.

'FAIR WAGES': THE INFLUENCE OF THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL AND THE FABIANS

Ten years after the founding of the London County Council is an appropriate time to review their policies and practices with regard to the use of homeworkers in their clothing and miscellaneous contracts. Founded in 1889, from the outset the London County Council took the lead in local councils outlawing the use of sweated
labour in its clothing contracts, and implemented a 'Fair Wages' policy, which was initiated at one of their earliest meetings in March 1889:

This Council shall from time to time investigate any charges of sweating which may be brought forward upon the responsibility of any Councillor or any Alderman against any person or firm tendering for any contract with the Council and that in the event of such charges being established, such contracts shall be refused... on the ground that this Council declines to encourage in any way the sweating system. (109)

The findings of the Lords Committee on sweating prompted the LCC's initiatives, and even in their first year they tried to prevent homeworkers being used in their clothing contracts. The Special Committee on Contracts recommended: 'That in every contract for clothing entered into by the Council there shall be inserted a condition that the whole of the work... shall be done upon the contractor's premises.' (110)

In the years from 1889 to 1899 three different strands emerged in their labour policies. First, instead of buying the cheapest labour they, influenced by their Fabian colleagues, worked to adopt trade union rates for wages as its standard wage level and insisted that there was a moral minimum of earnings below which it was wrong for any Londoner to be allowed to work; secondly, they tried to ensure that all their contractors adopted the same 'Fair Wages' policy as them, and thirdly, they outlawed middlemen in their contracts wherever possible, and urged that work was done under their own control - their own Works Department was established in 1893. (111)

In this political atmosphere the Council developed an attitude to homework. In March 1891 witnesses who had given evidence to the Lords Committee were called to the Special Committee on Contracts. Clementina Black, Lewis Lyons (112) and Mrs Keller of the East London
Tailoresses, urged the Committee to 'set its face against homework' and the Committee made a number of suggestions intending to protect homeworkers, although their long-term view was that it was 'undesirable'.

The London County Council took their responsibilities seriously, knowing that other local councils looked to them to take the lead in such matters. As problematic as homework was perceived to be, they were fully aware of the difficulty of enforcing regulations against this type of work: 'precautions... would have to be elaborate'. And it was not until 1897 that a minimum scale of pay for clothing contracts was agreed between them and their own employees and a clause prohibiting the use of homeworkers was formally adopted, the contravention of which was a severe penalty of £100. It is impossible to say if homeworkers were denied work done on the Council's behalf, as no matter how vigilant they were, contractors and homeworkers had experience of evading rules and this clause, like all the others, could only have been enforced by an army of inspectors.

Sidney Webb and other Fabian members of the Council supported the 'Fair Wages' policies and their stand against homework. His evidence to the Lords Committee clearly stated his preference for factory work and abhorrence of homework. They had taken note of Charles Booth's poverty line fixed at twenty-one shillings a week in London and used this as a bench-mark for their own pay levels. Their labour policies were based on deliberate choices which aimed for the greatest possible efficiency and the outlawing of undercutting which was for them synonymous with:

incompetent, scamped work, the steady demoralisation of the craftsmen and all the degradation of sweating... the London County Council responsible as it is for the health... of the people of London declines to use its position as an employer
to deliberately degrade that health by paying wages so obviously and flagrantly insufficient for maintenance. 

Consequently, Spitalfields' homeworkers only stood to lose by the London County Council's Fabian influenced policies on sweated labour, and it is unlikely that they enjoyed any of the benefits of their 'Fair Wages' schemes. It is impossible to say whether they lost supplies of work or not, but they were part of the target of the Council's campaign to abolish homework in its own contracts. It is likely that they and their employers were able to evade the Council's regulations and carry on their business as they always had done.

THE CHANGING POLITICAL CLIMATE OF THE '90s

There were two changes of government in the 1890s. The Conservatives remained in power up to 1892, whereupon the Liberals won the General Election and remained in control until 1895. Then in 1895 the Conservatives took office and remained in power until the Liberal landslide of 1906.

The socio-economic context of the politicisation of women's sweated homework during the 1890s was dominated by the hardening of male trade union opposition to long hours. Fears about the breakdown of traditional (male) crafts were regularly expressed. Calls were made for greater stability in wages although there were concerns that a minimum wage would increase unemployment. Trade unionists were vocal in their demands for effective legislation to eradicate sweated labour which was considered to be a real and long term threat to their livelihoods. During the three years the Liberals were in office there were attempts to secure fair wages in central and local government contracts. The Liberals faced an articulate demand to
make a precedent in the struggle for 'wages justice' by establishing a minimum wage in their government departments. H.V. Emy points out that by 1892 social reform for the working-classes was not yet identical with the claims of labour, and Liberal reformers hoped that through their emphasis on electoral reform and promoting a gradual absorption of labour within a more democratic process, there would be a clarification of labour ambitions and a willingness by labour to operate within the existing institutions. By the early 1890s the Liberals were more au fait with various social problems and had friends in the Fabian Society and the Cooperative Movement. However some Liberals were still wary of Social Radicalism, preferring administrative reform to sweeping legislative change. The Radicals in the Liberal Party favoured close ties with the socialist ideas of the Fabians, such as Poor Law reform, municipal housing, minimum wages, factory legislation, old age pensions and a minimum working day. Official Liberalism gave no explicit commitment to the interests of labour and fair wages clauses. Traditional Radicals in the party were keen on root and branch reform of the constitution. They were for humanitarianism, opposed landed privileges and aimed for equality of political opportunity for all. Social Radicals were concerned with the kind of issues articulated by the lobby which campaigned against homework, and their influence was felt in the politicisation of women's homework. They were concerned about starving children, wanted Wages Boards for sweated industries, old age pensions and the nationalisation of the land. A number were out-and-out Labour sympathisers. But they did not all agree on all issues. Liberal and Labour interests often disagreed with each other on reform, some opposed factory legislation limiting working hours,
although there was a broad consensus which agreed on the morality of an eight hour day and fair wages. (171)

Between 1892 and 1895 working conditions formed a back-drop to the government's administration. Politicians were ignorant of the lifestyles of Spitalfields' homeworkers. Despite back-bench pressure they were slow to adopt the fair wages principle in government contracts. Cabinet Papers referred to earlier in the chapter give an insight into this reluctance to act positively to deal with the use of sweated labour in its own contracts.

It would be fair to say that, troubled as they were in the 1890s by internal divisions, the Liberals could not and would not make homework a priority. They were divided among themselves on major issues like Home Rule, electoral reform, temperance reform and Welsh Disestablishment. Homework was not yet deemed important enough to require concerted political action and initiatives. Women were not enfranchised and homework was not seen as an issue among the electorate. (122)

Royal Commissions and Select Committees of the '90s on sweated labour, the aged poor and unemployment, added to the quality of information but did not produce new legislation. The major obstacle of tax-payer and rate-payer resistance to new expensive and intrusive laws ensured minimal change. (173) Although, despite these attitudes, by 1900 the politicians' and commentators' vocabularies at least accommodated phrases such as 'the social question', 'social reform', 'social problems' and 'social welfare'. They were influenced, Thane asserts, by a realisation of the implications of three decades of social and economic change and the rise of political and industrial movements. While 'social questions' were not at the top of either the Conservative or the Liberal agendas, they were gaining ground in
political thinking. Given this context, it appears that homeworkers received a disproportionate amount of attention and comment, thanks to the activities and influence of those who originated and sustained the debate on 'the problem of homework'.

Recent historians of sweated labour have noted that in their Lordships' evidence of 1888-1890, there was no positive political response to their situation in 1890, or the rest of the decade. The 1880s had seen both the Conservatives and the Liberals reluctant to legislate men's hours of work, believing it was an infringement of their personal liberty. However, between 1890 and 1906 there were gradual but fundamental changes in political attitude and both political parties accepted that they should lay down certain minimum standards in their capacity as employers in government contracts, and that the Factory Acts needed extending to regulate non factory and non workshop work. The two Acts of 1891 and 1895 had tried and failed to grapple with the squalor of homeworkers' premises. Also, a somewhat naive idea gained currency in the 1890s that if men's wages were improved, then their wives would not need to work. But this thesis fails when we consider the thousands of widows and abandoned wives who were the sole breadwinners. By 1900 most politicians believed that women's waged work was a bad thing which caused: high infant mortality; poor health among women workers; immorality; child neglect; chaotic homes and workshy husbands. Those who were concerned about homework were informed by and articulated these views, with vigour throughout the decade.

Policies which could have improved the pay and conditions of Spitalfields' homeworkers were not an urgent matter at governmental level. During the 1890s homeworkers' conditions had not changed. Women trade unionists of the 1880s who had tried to solve home-
workers' problems by unionisation, had by the late 1890s completed a turnaround and promoted legislation and radical social reform as the way forward. It was the Women's Industrial Council which seized the political initiative and drafted the first bill to clean up homeworkers' homes and license this work. From this time on, the allies they made both in and out of the House of Commons would enable them to keep this issue on the agenda and in the public and politicians' minds.\(^\text{128}\)

The implications of the living and working conditions experienced by the poorest women in the workforce would not be acted upon until the issue was twinned with motherhood, and the future of the race and the Empire. Until then only token gestures tinkering around with factory legislation to deal with the alleged public health risks of homework were offered.

By 1900 it was obvious to many that homeworkers' lives had not improved, and may have deteriorated.\(^\text{129}\) There was a suspicion that their numbers had grown. The operation of the two Factory Acts of the previous decade may have swelled the numbers of homeworkers, as contractors and factory and workshop owners colluded with their homework labour force to evade the requirements of 1891 and 1895.\(^\text{130}\)

The politicisation of homework gathered momentum throughout the 1890s. It never lost the epithets 'evil', 'dirty', 'problem', and 'squalid' and 'dangerous'. It had been politicised in the 1880s for the first time, and the further discoveries which were made in the '90s added to the political baggage which the issue carried into the early twentieth century. The scourge of the public's health, the polluters and wreckers of homes and wilful saboteurs of the Empire were a shorthand for the homeworkers of Spitalfields.

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CHAPTER 3

MOTHERHOOD, RACE AND EMPIRE

Added to the concerns of the last decade of the nineteenth century, a new weapon was added to the homework abolitionists' arsenal of criticism. Between 1901 and 1904 the Government, the intelligentsia and the Press became concerned about the causes of the apparent physical deterioration of the working-classes as revealed by the rejection of at least a quarter of the recruits trying to join up and fight in the Boer War. Working-class mothers and their poor mothercraft were blamed by the majority of witnesses who gave evidence to the Physical Deterioration Committee in 1903. The creed of Motherhood, Race and Empire was consolidated into the political framework by architects of social policy from this period onwards. Homeworkers were not specifically singled out for blame, but working-class lifestyles in general, and mothers in particular. A new piece of factory law, the 1901 Factory and Workshop Act, produced better information on homeworkers and their circumstances. It can be argued that the new legislation increased the volume of homework being done. In the face of growing legislation, many employers abandoned factory and workshop production in favour of cheaper homeworkers. Rather than regulating homework more fully and thereby making it more difficult for women to earn their living in this way, the Act of 1901 increased their supplies of work.
INFORMATION AND SOCIAL POLICY: THE 1901 CENSUS

The Census of 1901 asked the population of England and Wales a new question. Home Secretary Lord Ritchie directed the Enumerators to ask whether a person was working at home, if so in what capacity, as an employer or employee or on their own account. The Registrar-General explained the origin of the question: 'In the course of the preparation for the Census of 1901, urgent representations having been submitted to us by the Home Office and the Board of Trade to the effect that certain further changes in our classification would greatly enhance the value for legislative and administrative purposes.' The first attempt at discovering the number of people in certain industries working in their own homes had been made in the 1891 Census, but the results were found to be 'excessively untrustworthy.' The purpose behind this 1901 question was the better administration of existing and future factory legislation.

Nineteenth century censuses reflected the background and interests of the incumbent Superintendents of the General Register Office which, in turn, revealed wider contemporary concerns about the health and housing of individuals and about the state of the economy and class relations. From being a simple head-count from 1801 to 1831, by the end of the century the census material was used as data for policy making, fuelled by the mid-century's enthusiasm for the collection of statistics. The 1851, 1861 and the 1871 Censuses revealed Superintendent William Farr's medical background and interests and yielded vital information about the incidence and spread of epidemic diseases. The retirement of Farr in 1880, and the changes in the intellectual climate of the last twenty years of the century; better information on the causes of disease; better
sanitation; and the overall decline in the death rate; meant that Farr's interests did not inform the Censuses of 1891 and 1901. Instead they reflected concern about the social and economic structure of the nation. Increased foreign economic competition, the eugenicists' concern about the future of the race, and a widely-held perception of heightened class tensions, influenced the information gathered in the last two censuses of the nineteenth century. The interest in homework in the 1901 Census reflected growing official concern about its relation to the public's health and housing, and a consequent desire for better enforcement of factory legislation in this area. Therefore the Census material formed a vital ingredient in the growing body of information which was used as a catalyst for change. The making of social policy, of which Spitalfields' homeworkers are an example, relied on the gathering of social and economic information by government departments such as the General Register Office, the Home Office, the Board of Trade, Royal Commissions, and Select Committees' reports; groups including the Women's Industrial Council, the women's trade union movement and the Fabians; private individuals such as Charles Booth and specialist journals like The Lancet and The British Medical Journal. The accumulation of detailed information was a concomitant of a widespread interest in homeworkers, who were thought to be fossils from the pre-industrial economy, and solutions to the problems they were alleged to pose drew heavily on material which was influenced by a wide range of preconceptions.

A detailed house-to-house analysis of homework in Spitalfields using the 1901 Census will not be possible until 2002. Meanwhile the digests of information, which are not confidential, provide some indication of the number of females over the age of ten in these four
categories. The figures for Shoreditch and Stepney, which included Spitalfields, give some impression of homework in 1901.

**TABLE 2: HOMEWORK IN SHOREDITCH AND STEPNEY, 1901**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>SHOREDITCH</th>
<th>STEPNEY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>upholsteresses</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hair and feather work</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paper bag and box-makers</td>
<td>1,839</td>
<td>669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tailoresses</td>
<td>1,128</td>
<td>9,311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>milliners</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dressmakers</td>
<td>1,004</td>
<td>1,965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shirt-makers and seamstresses</td>
<td>1,816</td>
<td>2,321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boot, shoe and slipper-makers</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>artificial flower-makers</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'other workers in dress'</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>1,169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tobacco manufacture</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>1,877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>silk manufacture</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Census of 1901, 1902, Table 35, p.141 and p.145*

**THE FACTORY AND WORKSHOP ACT, 1901**

In the spring of 1901 another attempt was made by the campaign initiated by the Women's Industrial Council to get their bill 'for the better regulation of home industries' through Parliament. Although it had more support in the House of Commons than in 1899, it did not succeed. The Factory and Workshop Act of 1901 neutralised any chance of success. Closing the loopholes of the 1895 Act with regard to homeworkers was one of its aims. Local authorities were now required and empowered to obtain lists of outworkers and homeworkers and inspect and ensure that their homes were fit as workplaces. For the first time 'The Home' as a workplace was legally open to entry and inspection. Section 107 required lists of
outworkers be kept in certain trades, which were decided by the Secretary of State:

The occupier of every factory and workshop and every contractor employed by any such occupier in the business of the factory or workshop shall keep in the prescribed form and manner... prescribed lists having the names and addresses of all persons directly employed by him, either as workmen or contractors in the business of the factory or workshop outside the factory or workshop and the places where they are employed.

Twice a year, by 1st February and 1st August, they were to send copies of the lists to the district council where the workplace was situated. Every council had to examine the lists, and forward copies to colleagues in other district councils if outworkers were included on a list under another authority's supervision.

At last it seemed that homeworkers were being targeted more precisely: 'This section shall apply to any place from which any work is given out and to the occupier of that place and to every contractor employed by any such occupier in connection with the said work as if that place were a workshop.' However, the penalties were low: 'In the event of a contravention... by the occupier of a factory or workshop or place by a contractor, the occupier or contractor shall be liable to a fine not exceeding forty shillings and in the case of a second or subsequent offence not exceeding five pounds.'

Section 108 of the new Act attempted to put an end to work being carried out in 'unwholesome premises':

If the district council within whose district is situate a place in which work is carried on for the purpose or connection with the business of a factory/workshop give notice in writing to the occupier of the factory or workshop or to any contractor employed by any such occupier that that place is injurious to the health of the persons employed therein, then if the occupier or the contractor after the expiration of one month from the receipt of the notice gives out work to be done in that place and the place is found by the court... to be so injurious and dangerous, he shall be liable to a fine not exceeding ten pounds. 
However, not all trades were covered by this clause: 'It shall not apply except in the case of persons employed in such classes of work as the Secretary of State may specify by special order.' The making of wearing apparel was included within the terms of the Act, and indeed homework in the clothing trades was the focus of contemporary concern which had canvassed the insertion of these clauses into the new Act. Section 109 dealt specifically with the dangers of the presence of infectious diseases such as scarlet fever and smallpox in homeworkers' dwellings:

If the occupier of a factory or workshop or any place from which any work is given out or any contractor employed by any such employer causes or allows wearing apparel to be made, cleaned or repaired in any dwelling house or building occupied therewith whilst any inmate of the dwelling house is suffering from scarlet fever or smallpox, then unless he proves he was not aware of the existence of the illness in the dwelling house and could not reasonably have been expected to become aware of it, he shall be liable to a fine not exceeding ten pounds.

Further, local authorities were empowered to prohibit homework in places where there was infectious disease and this applied to: 'the making, cleaning, washing, altering, ornamenting, finishing and repairing of wearing apparel and any incidental work, and such other classes of work as may be specified by special order of the Secretary of State.' Curiously, homeworkers who made pillow lace, gloves, and who plafted straw, were exempted from the Act, as were those whose home did 'not of itself constitute that house or room or workshop where the labour is exercised at irregular intervals and does not furnish the whole or principal means of living to a family'.

Debate in the House of Commons which preceded this Act was often impassioned and derogatory about homework, the places where it was done and the women who did it. The debates on homework in Hansard
provide the context in which this subject was defined and perceived. John Burns, Labour MP for Battersea, and a determined opponent of homework, was keen to legislate this kind of work out of existence. James Kenyon, Conservative and Unionist MP for Bury, and a manufacturing employer, accepted that home industries needed regulation, but 'was astonished that [Mr Burns] was trying to do away with what he ventured to think was a most important employment for poor people in this country... Some of them were in delicate health and not able to do a full day's work'. Burns' attitude to homework was one of unwavering hostility: 'I do wish the Home Secretary would take courage and abolish it altogether. That would solve a very knotty problem. Homework is difficult to control and very difficult to follow in the East End of London. It is practically impossible to control it and it is very difficult to watch.'

Sydney Buxton, Liberal MP for Poplar, Tower Hamlets, referred to the dearth of specific references to homeworkers in previous legislation which he felt had ensured its immunity and survival:

We have an immense number of regulations for the control... of the aristocracy of labour... but I have found only one reference of two to three lines in the reports of the Inspectors to the Home Office to any questions connected with homework... We want to know where the work, given out to be done at home, is sent to and under what conditions, and that can only be done by registered lists and periodical supervision.

The threat to the public's health was still a major factor in the politicisation of homework, and surviving Cabinet papers concerning the 1901 Act clarify in a confidential memorandum the importance of a clean workplace, wherever it was, to its draughtsmen. Sections 5 and 6 of the 1895 Act had tried to deal with employers who handed out homework to squalid dwellings, but failed. Failure was rooted in
fears about violating the sanctity of the home, and the expense of enforcing such legislation, hence the ambiguous wording of previous Acts.

Adelaide Anderson, the Principal Lady Inspector of Factories and Workshops, was generally pleased with the local authorities’ first year’s work in cleaning up homeworkers’ premises. She and her team had established ‘cordial and effective cooperation’\(^{(17)}\) with seven of the London borough councils, and progress was made in the keeping of outworkers’ lists. In 1902 she and her team carried out special investigations into industries which used homeworkers. Miss Squire made a special study of doll and toy-makers and concluded that this trade was fraught with health risks for the nation’s children:

> It is a weird sight... to see a whole family sitting on the floor of a bare room heaped with shavings with which each person is rapidly stuffing the bodies of dolls... there is no need to emphasise the fact that some risk to the purchaser’s children is incurred at every stage... and that it behoves local authorities to watch such homes with especial care during any epidemic of the diseases of childhood. \(^{(18)}\)

Looking back in 1911 on the history of factory legislation, B.L. Hutchins was not optimistic about bringing homework up to the same high standards of regulation that factory work enjoyed:

> The best plan... is compulsory registration of all places in which work of any sort is carried out and the enforcement of a penalty for the carrying on of work in any place not so registered and licensed. Until this is done the tendency of factory legislation of unskilled trades must be to some extent to drive work into the homes.

The difficulty in finding and keeping track of homeworkers made it almost impossible to enforce it in the spirit in which it was framed. \(^{(19)}\)

The execution of the 1901 Factory and Workshop Act revealed a number of pitfalls: 'If the Act of 1895 by making the Home Office
responsible for its execution had placed the controlling authority at such a distance from its subjects that no effective supervision was possible, the Act of 1901, by transferring the tasks to the local authorities, had put its enforcement into the hands of men who could not be trusted to enforce it. Vested interests played a major part in the inadequate enforcement of the homework provisions as local authorities were under the influence of local contractors in whose interest it was that the Factory Acts were not fully enforced. In 1906 a Parliamentary Committee would note that although there had been over a thousand breaches of the law, only three prosecutions had been completed, and only a quarter of all the Medical Officers of Health had sent in reports to the Home Office on the conditions in the workshops they were obliged by law to inspect.\(^{20}\)

Recent historians of women's sweated labour have noted that some Medical Officers of Health in London acted 'with vigour and thoroughness and remodelled the health and sanitary departments in order to administer the law'. St Pancras officials were vigilant; Marylebone was notorious for its negligence, and in Bethnal Green before 1901 enforcement was almost non-existent. Better enforcement led to a growth in outworking and homework - it was inevitable that small contractors would put out more work rather than trying to abide by the terms of the Act. Between 1901 and 1907 four out of the nine London boroughs involved in the clothing trades experienced a growth in outwork and homework.\(^{21}\)

However inadequate, the 1901 Factory and Workshop Act was the first serious attempt to legislate on homework. Although factory inspectors could demand to see the twice yearly lists, they had no authority to act on the conditions they found. Often the lists were out of date as they were based on a census which was only taken on
two days in a year, which did not include all homeworkers as home industries involved seasonal and irregular employment. Also, the lists only included homeworkers who took the work out and not other women and children who helped them or to whom they sub-contracted the work. While the major ambitions of the Act was to outlaw homework being done in insanitary conditions where infectious diseases were present, homework’s hidden nature and the way the Act was enforced guaranteed that women in places like Spitalfields experienced little interference in their working lives. Until an army of inspectors was appointed homeworkers could carry on as they always had done, and many of them may have had their supplies of work boosted as a direct consequence of the Act. The politicisation of homework and the attempts to clean it up and ultimately abolish it were thwarted by endemic poverty which necessitated women earning a living in this way.\(^{(22)}\) Significantly, this was the conclusion which Jack London\(^{(23)}\) reached in the same year as the 1901 Census. The American socialist spent seven weeks in the East End of London and his book *People of the Abyss* (1902), was the result of his adventures and observations. He visited Spitalfields and described in lurid terms, reminiscent of the pre-1880s literature on the area, the circumstances of the homeworkers he met: 'The streets were filled with a new and different race of people, short of stature and of wretched beer-sodden appearance.'\(^{(24)}\) The degeneration of the race was underway there: 'It is incontrovertible that the children grow up into rotten adults, without virility or stamina, a weak-kneed, narrow-chested, listless breed that crumples and goes up and down in the brute struggle for life... one is forced to conclude that the Abyss is literally a huge man-killing machine.'\(^{(25)}\)
HOMEWORK AS AN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH ISSUE

From the mid 1890s onwards homework came to be seen by various investigators as one of the 'dangerous trades', dangerous for the worker and her family, and fatal to the consumer. In Dangerous Trades, published in 1902, T. Oliver, Professor of Physiology at Durham University, included a chapter on homework. It was a picture of poverty and squalor: 'There is perhaps no section of industrial life regarding which so much misconception prevails... the typical homeworker does not dwell in any ivy-clad cottage surrounded by all the accessories of highly picturesque poverty... where the kettle sings on her well-burnished hob, and geraniums bloom perennially on her window sill.'

Homeworkers suffered a variety of industrially related diseases which Oliver described. Generally, their overwork caused extreme fatigue which undermined their health, but more specifically: fur pullers suffered chronic chest complaints; tailoresses had high rates of tuberculosis; seamstresses and laundresses suffered from cramp and rheumatism; feather-workers and silk-weavers experienced chest infections caused by dust; artificial flower-makers were at risk of arsenic poisoning because of the large amounts of arsenic used in paper-making; sack-sewers often had badly damaged hands; hat-makers could be poisoned by the mercury in felt; upholsteresses and mattress-makers were said to be at risk from anthrax-contaminated horse-hair, and matchbox-makers' health could be impaired by the fumes from the glue they used. The health of homeworking mothers was, they said, endangered by the kind of work they did, as was that of their families and of consumers.
The Women's Industrial Council's 1897 study, which also mentioned similar health problems, was cited by Oliver and other campaigners to give authority to their claims about the danger of homework and their call for its ultimate abolition. The shift of focus in the earliest years of the century was part of a growing concern with the health of the mothers of the nation's most prized assets, its children. The author of the chapter on homework, A. Ballantyne, a doctor, noted that public opinion had been won round to believe that homework was dangerous, and that now was the time to empower certain professionals to enter homes to save lives. (26)

THE EMPLOYMENT OF MOTHERS

Adelaide Anderson's report for 1904 raised a new consideration regarding the employment of women which had particular relevance to Spitalfields' homeworkers. Current factory legislation insisted that it was illegal for a mother to return to work within four weeks of the birth of her baby. A wide range of campaigners hoped to extend this period to two or three months, and even six months. Anderson was against any such extension fearing it would encourage further growth of homework:

"If it were made illegal for mothers working in factories and workshops to return to their employment within two to three months... a possible result would be the increase in homework. This in my opinion would be disastrous... we have seen the homeworking mother resume her work the same day or within two to three weeks after the birth of her child."

The long-term risks to the Empire were unacceptable:

"Not only does she [the homeworker] obtain a shorter period of time in which she may nurse and care for her baby, but in resuming her employment at so early a date, under one month, appears to permanently weaken her condition and reduce her capacity for bearing healthy children." (27)
The Lady Inspectors' report regarding the enforcement of the 1901 Act during 1904 included details of their investigations into home industries throughout the United Kingdom. Miss Vines' study of Shoreditch reinforced fears that homeworkers were indeed taking up work immediately after the birth of their babies. Their homes were dirty and dilapidated:

Much of the work there was carried on in basement kitchens or in rooms in which one or two members of a family slept and in several instances in one room which alone constituted the worker's home... the floors were filthy and needed scrubbing and brushing (the bedding was filthy)... while some of the women themselves needed a good scrub.

Mrs S, a tailoress who machined waistcoats, allowed her unwashed little boy to sit on the floor with his head (presumed verminous) leaning against one of the waistcoats which was hanging over the edge of the bed. And Mrs A, an artificial flower-maker, lived in a place where 'muddle and insanitation prevailed' and whose unwashed baby was strapped to a chair. \(^{(28)}\)

Anderson, whilst deploring the conditions under which most homework was done, understood how unrealistic it was to expect such dwellings to be pristine and their wifecraft and mothercraft to be always at a high level:

They cannot do impossibilities and we have to remember one room has to serve the manifold use of bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, sickroom, workshop and mortuary as well. And then the mother, when and how in addition to the household cooking and the bearing and nursing of children shall she find time or space to cleanse a counterpane... scrub a floor or wash herself? One can only marvel at the ceaseless, tireless energy displayed in the midst of such misery and dirt in the face of such tremendous odds.

The Principal Lady Inspector placed the homeworkers of Spitalfields and Shoreditch in the context of their own impoverished circumstances with a surprising degree of understanding and admiration. \(^{(29)}\)
THE INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON PHYSICAL DETERIORATION: THE MOTHERHOOD, RACE & EMPIRE IMPERATIVE

The findings of the Interdepartmental Report on Physical Deterioration were made public in the summer of 1904. The poor state of health of at least a quarter of the working-class recruits who had tried to join up and fight in the Boer War (1899-1902) had alarmed the army and government, and this report was the result of concern at the highest level. Its terms of reference were precise:

To make a preliminary inquiry into the allegations concerning the deterioration of certain classes of the population as shown by the large percentage of rejections for physical causes of recruits for the Army.

They were to: 'determine with the aid of such counsel as the medical profession... steps that should be taken to furnish the Government and the nation... with periodical data for an accurate comparative estimate of the health and physique of the people... to indicate generally the causes of such deterioration as does exist in certain classes and to point at the means by which it can be most effectively diminished'.

Interdepartmental committees were quieter and less publicised forums than Royal Commissions, and generally worked faster. Membership was confined to civil servants who met and heard evidence as part of their normal working day. They were kept away from publicity and were required to represent particular departments of state. Their work was informed by the objective of discovering the ways and means of getting things done, rather than acting as forums of debate on issues of principle.

Appointed in September 1903 by the Duke of Devonshire (who had chaired the Royal Commission on Labour in the early 1890s), the
Committee sat for twenty-six days and examined sixty-eight witnesses, fifty-four men and fourteen women. The Committee included a barrister, a senior medical civil servant, an educationalist and a recruiting inspector. The nature of physical deterioration was described and the causes were discussed at length by witnesses. The largest single group were doctors and dentists; four Medical Officers of Health; two Members of Parliament; three senior army personnel and two teachers. Others present included a leader of a girls' club; a member of the Charity Organisation Society; a representative of the Salvation Army and the poverty investigators Charles Booth and Joseph Rowntree.

During the twenty-six days of evidence, the causes of, and blame for, the physical deterioration of the nation were laid at the feet of mothers. Not all mothers, but working-class mothers and their poor skills in mothercraft. Drunken mothers were imperilling the race and Empire: 'The tendency of the evidence was to show that drinking habits among women of the working-classes are certainly growing with consequences extremely prejudicial to the care of the offspring, not to speak of the possibility of children being born prematurely disabled.' Working mothers were not feeding their children correctly or adequately and, because of their wilful insistence on earning a living, were neglecting the home:

A large proportion of British housewives are tainted with incurable laziness and distaste for the obligations of domestic life... if, as many [witnesses] contended the effect of female factory labour in factory and workshop is to form bad wives and mothers, any changes in the industrial conditions of the people that increase the demand for this class of labour react upon the comfort of the homes.

The Committee was reminded of the logistical difficulties facing women who tried to provide cooked food for their families. Multi-occupancy of houses originally intended for one family, and the poor
quality housing available to the working-classes, made a mother's duties problematic. One kitchen had to serve a number of families: 'A large number of tenements do not contain the requisite apparatus for the preparation of food and the culinary art, if practised at all, is reduced to its crudest form of expression.' Working-class females were said to be poor managers of money: 'The tendency appears to be to spend as little as possible on food.' Young men were said to take better care of themselves in this respect than the other sex 'as they are not under the temptation to spend money on personal adornment, an object for which women will, it is said, stint themselves on food to a terrible degree and sacrifice many of the necessaries of life'. Irish mothers, notorious drunkards, were allegedly the worst mothers of all, and Jewish mothers were described in almost adulatory language.

By the time the findings and recommendations of the Physical Deterioration Committee were published in 1904, motherhood had become a political issue. The civil servants who summarised the witnesses' evidence for the report maintained that Misses Garnett, Young, Scott and Anderson's descriptions of female factory labour showed that:

The factory employment of mothers had a bad effect on the offspring, both direct and indirect, but opinions differed as to the extent of the evil and the practical steps that could be taken to remedy it... speaking from extensive experience of the Potteries, Miss Garnett declared that married women's labour was really at the root of all the mischief. The children are born very weakly, they are improperly fed and placed in the charge of incapable people... Miss Anderson acknowledged the evil... but her appreciation of all the conditions of the problem led her to pause before subscribing to the prudence of any legislative change.

In the midst of universal condemnation of working-class girls and women in general and working-class mothers in particular, at least
one witness urged caution when interpreting the data which derived from the recently rejected recruits. Any conclusions should be carefully analysed and the nature and quality of the recruits thoroughly understood. Professor D.J. Cunningham, Professor of Anatomy at Edinburgh University and Chairman of the Anthropometric Committee of the British Association warned:

Because the class from which the recruits are derived varies from time to time with the condition of the labour market. When trade is good and plentiful it is only from the lowest stratum of the people that the Army receives its supply of men; when on the other hand trade is bad, a better class of recruit is available. Consequently the records of the recruiting department of the Army do not deal with a homogeneous sample of the people taken from one distinct class. (42)

He believed there was no evidence of serious physical deterioration and reminded the Committee that the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons had also submitted more evidence on this matter to the Home Office.

Thus, according to Professor Cunningham, the sample on which the Report's raison d'être had been based was unrepresentative of the overall state of the nation's children's health. This of course did not deter the witnesses from believing the sample to be representative and expressing their views as to the causes of the physical deterioration of working-class children. They brought their own experiences and prejudices to bear on the evidence they presented to the Committee and influenced the fifty-three recommendations which were made. (43) One needs to treat the material evaluated by the Committee with caution. Some of the most respected and experienced witnesses believed the data as presented by the recently rejected army recruits not to be typical, and that it should not be treated as a model for all working-class children and their mothers. And yet blame was apportioned to working girls and mothers. Following the
Physical Deterioration Report, a series of infant and child and maternal welfare schemes were implemented in the period before the First World War. A sense of unease was almost inevitable given the context of Britain's concern, especially in the post-1900 period, about her foothold in the world's economy, and her industrial and naval rivalries with the United States and Germany. The nation's children were the future soldiers and workers for the Empire.\(^{8}\)

The key to its survival and continued success was felt by most commentators to be under serious threat from the dangers present in their own homes. Not only was there the common and widespread feeling that the God-given sanctity of the home had been violated from all directions, but that the working-class mother's economic activities, both in the home and in their departure from it to earn money in factories or workshops, had made all women's waged labour (especially homework) and motherhood, political issues of grave importance.

For the first time in the twenty-year debate on homework, it was not blamed for the physical deterioration of the nation's children. There were indeed very few references to it. Charles Booth, once such an outspoken critic, seemed quite satisfied with the way local authorities were dealing with homework when it was being carried out in private dwellings,\(^{8}\) whereas Dr Lewis Hawks, a general practitioner in Finsbury (on the edge of the City) described local homeworking conditions: 'There is a great deal of work done at home.' When asked if it prevented mothers breast-feeding their children, he replied: 'It takes her away from the home, going backwards and forwards very often.'\(^{4}\) And the conditions under which this kind of work was done were: 'perfectly sickening'. He believed that these kinds of work gave a distaste for homelife and made them useless as
mothers. This was the total of references to homework in the report.

Every aspect of working-class women's mores were blamed for physical deterioration, with the exception of an explicit condemnation of homework. In the past this moment would have been seized upon by reformers and politicians to deplore and attempt to outlaw this form of women's waged labour. It is interesting that they did not do so on this occasion. Working-class mothers as a body were the target of vitriolic criticism, homeworkers were implicitly included in this attack. Within two years of this report, and stimulated by its findings, homeworkers were used as living exhibits by the anti-sweating campaign in The Daily News' Sweated Industries Exhibition in London, in May 1906.

John Burns, a long standing opponent of married women's work also used the Physical Deterioration Report to support his views in a vigorous campaign to legislate married women out of the workforce completely. In August 1904 he thundered in the House of Commons:

What was the use of talking of soldiers and sailors for the Empire, when the embryonic soldier was described as it was in that Report? What was the use of talking of our troops not being able to come up to the standard they ought to be in the face of that Report on Physical Deterioration?... in Poplar... they [could] see the product of children reared under the slum conditions, reared only furtively by mothers who could not be mothers to them because of the labour they do... and the conditions under which they lived... In these days when we were talking of Imperial... doctrines and when these children were wanted to uphold the Imperial destiny... the only way that could be obtained was by the Home Office taking its courage in both hands and raising its staff of inspectors from one hundred and fifty to three hundred. If they did this they would do more to arrest physical decay than all that had been done and all that had been said and written during the last century. (48)

'Social Imperialism' was a term widely used in the 1950s. Franz Neumann described it as an attempt on the part of the governing classes to provide a mass base for imperialism which was itself an
attempt to incorporate the working-classes into an imperialistic state. The economist J.A. Schumpeter defined it as: 'Entrepreneurs and other elements woo[ing] the workers by means of social welfare concessions... and was an attempt to revive the people's imperialism of ancient times to create a warrior nation.' The roots of British social imperialism, stated Bernard Semmel, lie in the nineteenth century history of the misery of working-class life. England had withstood any advance in socialism until the 1880s, and even then the socialism which did emerge was not Marxist and revolutionary but nationalist in its tone and scope. The Social Imperialism of the late nineteenth century aimed to draw all the classes together to prove to the poor that their interests were inseparable from those of the nation.

The crippling cost of the Boer War, some £250 million (£10,000,000,000 at today's value) ensured that for reasons of cost the Conservatives did not respond to growing pressure for central government to provide monies for old age pensions and subsidies for working-class housing. Thane points out that the military setbacks, and the revelations about the state of the health of working-class recruits, fuelled demands for greater government intervention via social reform. Fears about Britain's industrial decline were articulated with an intensity by employers, politicians and the Press, who called for greater managerial efficiency and social welfare measures to: improve the physical condition of the working-class; increase the size of the population; and for pensions and sickness and unemployment benefits for contributing workers. Britain and the Empire's future were identified and embodied in the condition of its working-class children, its future soldiers and workers. The 'fall-out' from the Boer War and the corpus of information
gathered by the resulting Physical Deterioration Report triggered off developments in all areas of British political life and gave a boost not only to the nation's imperialistic emotions, but to those reformers concerned about Britons' health, and the employment of its mothers. Mothers who worked in factories had, since the 1890s, been the target of criticism, and their alleged neglect in all areas of home life was reiterated throughout and beyond the 1904 Report on Physical Deterioration.

The linking of social imperialism with the universal condemnation of working mothers is fundamental to the politicisation of women's homework. Poverty and unemployment had been perceived as the most serious threats of the 1880s, by 1904 it was the national physique and physical deterioration of the working-class. The financial circumstances and lifestyles of working women were inextricably linked to these imperialistic concerns.

WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS AND THE HOMEWORK DEBATE

The Women's Trade Union League, although hampered by a chronic shortage of funds from producing much propaganda about homeworkers, kept a watching brief on the effects of the 1901 Factory and Workshop Act. In 1903, Mary MacArthur became the League's new Secretary. This appointment had a major impact on their activities: 'This fair-haired, rosy-cheeked Brunehilde changed the character of the League from a lady-like, semi-philanthropic group of statistical tabulators of facts to a dynamic expanding organisation which in two years would grow from fifty thousand to seventy thousand.' MacArthur saw trade unionism as a way of ending low pay and was not keen on strikes, but was enough of a pragmatist to support them if they had a good chance
of success. In the spring of 1903 the League discussed the Germans' attempts to deal with their homework problem, and organised a meeting in Spitalfields for homeworkers in the clothing trade. Gertrude Tuckwell declared in the spring of 1903:

I have lost the belief that this [solving the problem of the sweated trades] will ever be gained by the workers themselves. A really healthy condition can only be brought about through compulsory wage boards and the legal minimum wage fixed by them.

The League was short of money and the dearth of references to homework in their Annual Reports and monthly magazine, the Women's Union Journal, indicates that it was not the priority it had once been, and that it had been overtaken by other problems in women's working lives which were more easily solved. However, the scope of the League's work was growing, given the current political climate, viz.: the recent factory legislation; concern over working mothers; attempts to blame working-class mothers for the high rate of infant mortality; poverty and women's unemployment and the unfolding scenario of the 'dangerous trades' which employed thousands of women and girls.

The Women's Industrial Council continued to prioritise homework, widening their political and investigative agenda. During September 1902 they sent over a hundred homeworkers 'for rest and refreshment' to the little house established by Mr Holmes at Walton-on-the-Naze in Essex. Holmes, an ex-police court missionary, hoped in the not too distant future to provide a winter home at Hampstead to enable 'weary and grossly overworked homeworkers to have a rest from their toils'.

In cooperation with the Scottish Council for Women's Trades, they first drafted a Home Industries Bill in 1899, and with the support of friends in Parliament had attempted to get it through the House of
Commons at every session since that date and worked to keep the public informed on 'this intricate and important problem'. Their own concern about homework was rooted in the public health and motherhood issues. Flower-making, they insisted, had a darker side which was homework: 'Only the least skilled and the least profitable part is done in the homes' where the women only earned four to five shillings a week:

They sit at work for very long days... and they work in ill-ventilated places with insufficient sanitary appliances. Their homes are such as may be expected under the circumstances described... Not only do the workers suffer, but the public have no security against the work being done in places where there is infectious disease.  

There was no let-up in their preoccupation with the issue of inadequate parenting and the deterioration of the race paradigm. In 1903 the Women's Industrial Council's attitude was:

The neglected children of today are criminals, the wastrels and the paupers of tomorrow. Every little one who can be taken from that dangerous and demoralising playground, the street, can be taught to find pleasure in healthy games, physical exercise and intelligent occupations will become not only a happier and healthier, but also a more productive and less burdensome member of society.  

Between 1901 and 1904 the Women's Industrial Council took the view that motherhood should be taught to girls in schools and, as a pressure group within the women's movement, their political and legislative platform increasingly concentrated on the perils of homework, the increase in infant mortality, and ignorance of infant care and domestic responsibilities. As individuals, and as an organisation, they embraced many of the views expressed by the witnesses called to give evidence to the Physical Deterioration Committee. London's working women had a special and unique role in the politicisation of women's work at this time. Wage-earning women were no longer seen as an interesting survival of pre-industrial
days, instead they were increasingly used as a symbol for the condition of the female working-class. Women were a live issue in government analysis of labour and the information which was gathered by organisations like the Women's Industrial Council played a vital part in this area of political debate. "67"

Since the Factory and Workshop Act of 1901 there was an accumulation of better information on the numbers of homeworkers and the range of their activities and, when added to the Women's Industrial Council's 1897 study on London home industries, and the findings of the Physical Deterioration Report, an alliance of groups and individuals determined to take control of the situation and force legislation on a serious problem which was no nearer a solution despite twenty years of political activity.
CHAPTER 4

REDEFINING HOMEWORK: POLICY AND POLITICS, 1905-1908

Between 1905 and 1908 a fundamentally different approach was taken to tackle the homework problem than had been taken in earlier decades. The three years covered in this chapter see homework redefined and the foundations of government policy laid. Central to this change in the politics of the issue was the intervention of George Cadbury, The Daily News, and the powerful alliances forged by the National Anti-Sweating League and various women's organisations which ensured that the policy and politics of homework were drawn to public attention. The issues of the previous twenty years, public health, 'dangerous trades' and Motherhood, Race And Empire were woven into the anti-sweating movement's campaign for reform via the first piece of minimum wage legislation. For the first time in its twenty year history, the politics of homework was near to a legal remedy. These years see the defeat of the abolitionists' lobby; and the expression of the political will, informed by new concepts of social welfare and social reform, intent on solving the problems of women's sweated homework.
SETTING A NEW AGENDA: THE DAILY NEWS' SWEATED INDUSTRIES EXHIBITION

In 1906 two events, The Daily News' Sweated Industries Exhibition, and the foundation of the National Anti-Sweating League, suggested that a political solution would be found to a problem which had not been resolved or even ameliorated in twenty years. From 1906 onwards the public, politicians and reformers were drawn into a widening debate on sweated labour in general and the iniquity of homework in particular. The politics of homework received a new injection of personnel and ideas.

On May 2nd, Princess Henry of Battenberg opened The Daily News' Sweated Industries Exhibition at the Queen's Hall in Langham Place, London. The aim was to bring 'into fresh prominence a social evil which, though long recognised and deplored by all parties remains to this day without a remedy'. The exhibition committee wished it to be: 'very clearly and definitely understood that they are not either in this book [the catalogue] or by means of the exhibition, condemning employers of home industry workers as such'.

The Daily News, under the proprietorship of George Cadbury, head of the Quaker chocolate manufacturers and an influential employer, became the mouthpiece of the anti-sweating movement. In 1891 he bought four weekly provincial papers and his aim was: 'to raise the civic and moral standards of public life by bringing an enlightened and public spirited criticism to bear on public affairs and to use his influence for the good in an area [the Midlands] where he was known and respected'. He was a Liberal, and Lloyd George approached Cadbury in 1900 to persuade him to take over the ailing Daily News. Lloyd George wanted a national newspaper in sympathy
with Liberal party politics. Cadbury took control of the paper in 1902 and under his proprietorship all alcohol advertisements, betting forecasts and racing news were banned. Thus The Daily News and his other provincial papers were used to pursue his crusade against sweated labour and the low wages paid to homeworkers. Richard Mudie-Smith, the exhibition organiser, had been approached in February 1905 by Cadbury who wanted The Daily News exhibition to closely follow an earlier, small exhibition of 1904 in Bethnal Green, where goods, their manufacture and homeworkers were displayed. Homework was to be the focus of this exhibition:

not because the promoters failed to realise the suffering these [sweated industries other than home industries] entail, but because they rightly considered that to attempt too much in an initial effort was to risk the success of the work they believed it was in their power to accomplish, provided their whole strength could be concentrated upon it.

The fifty-six members of the exhibition's Council included the most eminent people of the day who were concerned about homework. There were eight MPs, including Keir Hardie, C.F.G. Masterman and L.G.C. Money; leading figures of the women's trade union movement, Clementina Black, Mrs Ramsay MacDonald, Miss Irwin and Gertrude Tuckwell; Robert Blatchford, the founder of the socialist newspaper The Clarion; clergymen; and the writers G.B. Shaw and H.G. Wells. (See Appendix J)

Their aims were:

To acquaint the public with the evils of Sweating, and to cultivate an opinion which shall compel legislation that will mitigate, if not entirely remove those evils. Such legislation does not either necessarily or primarily mean that home industry work is to be forbidden by law; it does mean that it must be regulated by law, that it shall be done under conditions which shall guarantee the public no less than the worker from disease.
Six hundred 'society' visitors paid a shilling to see the exhibition on the first day:

At three o'clock the gathering wore very much the aspect of a society crush, almost as though the attractions were a flower show or the West End bazaar. The dame of high degree and the well-grounded gentlemen of leisure had come to make personal acquaintance with the lamentable human facts to which Princess Henry of Battenberg by her gracious presence... had desired to draw public attention. The visitors paid 'rapt attention' to the display of homeworkers and their goods and expressed "amazement and dismay"... Society came and shuddered and expressions of sympathy and indignation fell from these gentle-natured folk. (13)

Gertrude Tuckwell's emotional lecture, 'Wages and Hours' cited a number of case studies:

The workers in the hall represented thousands of homes of our great towns and represented them inadequately as many of the hearers would know... The very things they (the audience) were wearing might be sweated and surely if it were so, they knew the clothes would burn into them like the fabled shirt of Nessus. (14) For the sweater is the purchaser, the whole nation, you and I.

The forty-four homeworkers and twenty-two stalls were the exhibits. Worker Number Three made matchboxes at a rate of two pence a gross. She earned on average less than five shillings a week and had to buy paste and string to tie the bundles together and firing to dry the wet boxes. Two hours out of the twelve were lost collecting and delivering work. The rent for the small room where she and her five children lived was two shillings and six pence. Her details were typical of the other homeworkers who were exhibited. (15) The thirty thousand visitors, approximately two thousand a day, were not permitted to give the homeworkers gratuities. (16) (See Appendix K)

The editorials of The Daily News, the lectures which were given at the Queen's Hall, and the articles in the official catalogue, convey the politics of the anti-sweating debate. The sponsors, The Daily News set the tone of the debate and warned that the reality of
homeworkers' lives was far worse than the exhibition had been able to portray and that their homes were an affront to the sanctity of the home:

No exhibition, however faithful, can reproduce the milieu which makes these home industries not only a struggle against starvation but a continual outrage upon the decency of family life. The furniture huddled into a corner to make room for material and machines, half-finished garments littered across the untidy bed... the unkempt children staggering under enormous bundles... But it is something we have the opportunity of seeing, many of us for the first time in our lives.

Even worse, the East End of London was imperilling the race:

'In nine cases out of ten the woman was absolutely compelled to take in some form of home industry. It was impossible for her to look after the children properly. Could they wonder at the high mortality among the children when the mother had to slave from morning to night. (17)

Margaret Irwin, a leading member of the Scottish Council of Women's Trades, was appalled at the cost to the homeworkers themselves. Referring to shirt-makers:

A point which strikes one particularly is the heavy strain of life on the married women who constitute the majority of the workers... the hopelessness of their outlook and the relentless, unremitting daily toil that goes on with them year in year out and which even sickness is scarcely allowed to interrupt. (18)

The familiar public health fears were a recurring theme of the lectures:

The sympathy of the community is easily aroused. What is more difficult to awaken is the sense of the terrible risks to which not only the workers but the purchasing public are exposed through the making of clothing, and other articles of general use in insanitary houses. One often finds in the worst of these homes that the woollen shirts, shawls and other articles of clothing on which the workers have been engaged during the day are used as coverings for the sick or do duty at night as bed-clothes for the members of the family generally. (19)
She reminded readers of the reputation for poor hygiene and housewifery enjoyed by sack-sewers:

Without exception the houses of all the sack-sewers were indescribably filthy. Some of them were entirely destitute of furniture and in others the sacks, dirty and vermin-infested would be used at night for bed and bed-clothes.

Thrift and hard work were said to be the first casualties when homeworkers' wages fell to starvation levels, when they were 'benumbed by a sense of utter hopelessness'. The spread of infectious diseases through home industries, the decline in mothercraft and housewifery and the defilement of the home were the crux of the campaigners' concerns.

Legislation was perceived to be the answer to the worst excesses. Minimum wages for the most sweated trades via Wages Boards and the licensing of homeworkers premises were the most discussed remedies, and two Bills were canvassed aggressively and promoted at the Exhibition. Sir Charles Dilke's Wages Boards Bill, and the Women's Industrial Council's Bill for the Better Regulation of Home Industries (first drafted in 1899) were commended by the exhibition organisers.

The thirty-two illustrations included in the exhibition catalogue are early representations of homeworkers in their own homes. The images are not squalid or especially poverty stricken and barely lived up to the reputation that homeworkers enjoyed. The five selected here, including the front cover, are typical of the rest of the material. The catalogue advised readers that the photographs had been 'taken in most places by false light and have not in any way been altered or, with two exceptions, touched up'. The photographs show homeworkers in home industries carried on in Spitalfields although the locations are not given.
THE SWEATED INDUSTRIES' EXHIBITION.

OFFICES.
62, QUEENS ROAD.
BAYSWATER.
SECRETARY.
MRS R. MUDIE-SMITH.

QUEEN'S HALL.

MAY 2ND TO 29TH OPEN 11 A.M. TO 8 P.M.
EXCEPTING MAY 14TH & 15TH

PRICE 6d

3. COVER OF THE DAILY NEWS SWEATED INDUSTRIES EXHIBITION CATALOGUE, 1906
5. MATCH AND TIN-TACK BOX-MAKERS, C. 1906
6. MAKING TROUSERS, C. 1906

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Illustration three (page 168) is the drawing on the front cover. The central figure is the mother making matchboxes, assisted by a bedraggled daughter, accompanied by a toddler and a baby. The room is small and crowded and bare. We see bare boards, a bed, a table, a chair; the patched washing is drying overhead. The matchbox-making industry is not only trespassing into their private space, but not paying them an adequate wage. The toddler seems to be eating its mother’s work. It is a scene of misery and neglect in an unloved room.

Illustration four (page 169) is a photograph captioned ‘Sack-Mender’. Margaret Irwin described the homes she had visited: 'Without exception the houses of all the sack-sewers... were indescribably filthy. Some of them were entirely destitute of furniture and in others the sacks, dirty and vermin-infested, would be used at night for bedclothes.' (23) The scene, of a young woman alone in her room, seems to have been posed to look downcast and oppressed by the pile of sacks next to her, which are taller than she is. She avoids looking at the camera. Her hair is neatly tied, she wears an apron and she owns a straw boater. Irwin’s description is not entirely borne out by this particular image.

Illustration five (page 170) is of four women making match and tin-tack boxes. The room is full of furniture, the walls are covered in framed prints and photographs and the mantelpiece is decked with ornaments. A Vesuvius of industry, we are manipulated to think, has erupted amongst this mother and her three daughters. The Liberal MP, Mr L.G. Chiozza Money, wrote the accompanying article. Again, the catalogue article does not marry up with the image. Matchbox-making was:

Frequently carried on under the most distressing conditions... made under the most filthy and revolting conditions. The nice clean-looking box of matches may have
been fashioned by a consumptive in a room reeking with pestilential matter. (24)

Illustration six (page 171) is of a family of four, a mother and three children finishing trousers. Their home has been taken over by other men's trousers. The daughter helps her mother and the two boys, both quite well dressed, who probably delivered the completed work and collected fresh supplies from a nearby warehouse. The paper-doily shelf trimmings bear witness to some level of affluence. (25)

Illustration seven (page 172) shows a family of bristle-pickers employed by the brush-making industry. The mother and two of her four children are engaged in this work. They are all properly dressed, and we can imagine they are properly shod. Their home is full of things. Rather than a picture of domestic neglect it is cheerfully cluttered and cosy - it is a God-fearing home, witness the God Bless Our Home framed motto. The mother has not tidied the dishes away, but there are plenty of dishes to tidy away when she has finished her work. This mother and others who did this work came in for criticism by the late Mrs Hogg, a founder member of the Women's Industrial Council, who wrote the article which this photograph illustrated:

It is one of the melancholy features of the neighbourhood to see sickly children, hardly more than infants, staggering along in the wind... with every muscle of their rickety little bodies strained beneath the load upon which the chance of next day's dinner depends... It is only by seeing the homes of brush-drawers (makers) that it is possible to realise all that is implied in the carrying on of a trade in one single room or the misery of these lives of endless toil. (26)

These five images invited readers to share the organisers' outrage at the practice of homework. To Edwardian middle-class eyes these photographs displayed poverty and married up with their perception of
what homework involved. These images tell us as much about those who commissioned them as the workers they were illustrating. As John Tagg reminds us, we use photographs as 'evidence' at our peril: the camera is not neutral and the images it produces are highly coded, and the power it wields is never its own. As a means of record it arrives on the scene imbued with a particular, powerful authority to transform daily life. This is not so much to do with the power of the camera but the power of the machinery which deployed it and guaranteed the authority of the images it constructed to stand as evidence.‘27’

We may choose to interpret the images in the catalogue differently, but at the time it is likely that anyone would feel disturbed by the gloomy rooms, the cluttered living arrangements and the sight of mothers and children working. The paraphernalia of homework, and its intrusion into private places where the absent father was present, was the point of these photographs. These images remind us of the invention of the factory which posited the innovation of The Home as a refuge from waged labour. The secret horror of these photographs to well-meaning middle-class contemporaries was the eruption of work into a space that two generations had sanctified. The Englishman's home had only recently become his castle, and the division of economic activities into what was considered to be their appropriate physical locations was a novel and much-prized Victorian invention, which ignored the use of the home as a workplace by all workers until industrialisation.
THE NATIONAL ANTI-SWEATING LEAGUE

This organisation was founded at the end of the Sweated Industries Exhibition. Its aim was to: 'secure payment of minimum rates for workers in the sweated trades'. Their Vice-Presidents and Committee included the campaigners of the day, viz: Sir Charles Dilke; the Earl of Dunraven who had been the Chairman of the House of Lords Report on the Sweating System in 1888-1890; Keir Hardie; the Chief Rabbi of England; Sidney and Beatrice Webb; H.G. Wells; Clementina Black; Mary MacArthur; Maud Pember Reeves; Gertrude Tuckwell and Reverend J.E. Watts-Ditchfield who had organised the Bethnal Green exhibition in 1904. Their campaign was a three-pronged attack: propaganda and exhibitions of sweated goods and workers, they would 'hold demonstrations, distribute literature, lend lantern slides and collections of sweated exhibits and supply lecturers to interested societies'; their investigative committee would enquire into conditions; and they would campaign for a legal minimum wage. (28)

Their first conference, (29) which lasted three days, took place in London's Guildhall that autumn. Some of the ideas of the late 1880s (30) 'consumers' leagues' and 'white lists' were aired again, but were rejected as a remedy. The League set up Homeworkers Leagues that summer, the headquarters were in Bethnal Green, the subscription was a penny a month and organisers investigated complaints. Within two years membership was three thousand. (31)

The first year's work of the National Anti-Sweating League concentrated on holding exhibitions of homeworkers and their trades and heavily promoted the idea of legal minimum wages. Branches were formed in London, Manchester and Liverpool. George Cadbury (32) was President. In June, September and November 1907, three sweating
exhibitions were held in London. The first, which was wholly organised by the League, was held in the Oratory in the precincts of the House of Commons, and the other two were held under the auspices of the Women's Labour League and the Independent Labour Party, using the exhibits from the Queen's Hall display, at the Bishopsgate Institute in East London in September and at St John's Institute, Westminster, in November. Oxford was chosen as another venue for this new method of raising the public's awareness of homework.

The Daily News described the exhibition held in Bishopsgate as 'Living Tableaux of Misery and Oppression'. Mrs Ramsay MacDonald and the Women's Labour League used some of the homeworkers from the Queen's Hall exhibition of 1906. She deplored the fact that since then 'the lot of the sweated has grown sensibly worse'. This display was wider in scope and included new exhibits from the sweated districts of Leicester, Birmingham and Staffordshire:

There is the danger of buying articles, many of which are made in places infected by diseases of the worst description. I have actually seen toothbrushes being made in the room where a consumptive was breathing his last.

The guardian of the public's health, The Lancet was pleased with recent developments:

Now... much more is known of the depressing and often tragic conditions under which women's work is carried on in our large centres of population, it is hardly necessary to indicate the bearing that this has upon the physical well-being of the present and future generations.

The National Anti-Sweating League's leading female activists, Margaret Irwin and Clementina Black, spoke on 'the problem of homework' throughout 1907. Their favoured solutions were the cleaning up of homeworkers' premises and/or a legal minimum wage for the worst paid in certain trades. Their policy statements were clear
about their future activities which would be propagandist in nature. The priority would be:

- to interest everyone in the matter... to show that it is possible to find remedies... to prove that which has already been achieved in other places like Australia and New Zealand and... to give our hearty support to secure this (the solution) by legislative action, a minimum wage in sweated industries and forward that policy by every means in our power.' (39)

Margaret Irwin's *The Problem of Homework* made a strong case for the need to clean up homeworkers' homes and regulate home industries by legislation. Her attitude to homework is best summed up:

> It can scarcely be argued that the circumstances of any worker, even the most necessitous, confer on her the right to carry on this work under any conditions she pleases, regardless of the public at large. No one can be allowed to keep a fever den at the public's risk. It would be poor economy. (40)

THE CASE FOR AND AGAINST MINIMUM WAGES

Clementina Black's *Sweated Industries and The Minimum Wage* was a straightforward case for the League's support for minimum wages in the worst paid trades. (41) Twenty years work with the Women's Trade Union Association, then the Women's Industrial Council, persuaded her that trade unionism for homeworkers had failed. They were no better organised than they had been twenty years before and she had come to believe that wage and factory legislation was the solution as 'they were probably the most completely wretched workers in our country' (42) and their homes had been defiled by such work:

> We have seen the dwelling of the homeworker robbed of every feature that makes a home... Most of us are still very little awake to the sacrifice of childhood that is daily being made in our midst... labour in childhood inevitably means in nine cases out of ten decadence in early manhood or womanhood and the prevalence of it among ourselves is perhaps the most serious of national dangers. (44)
Black was a pragmatist and aware of the inherent difficulties of minimum wage legislation but felt this to be the only solution. Colonial minimum wage experiments were not necessarily the model for Britain's sweated workers (although she favoured parts of New Zealand's approach). As a trade union organiser she knew the prejudices that would be voiced against any compulsory wage legislation which affected British male trade unionists. She, more than most of the League's Executive Committee, knew the mentality of male trade unionists and their resistance to changes which could be seen to benefit women workers whom they wanted to be removed from the labour market. It was essential to get the right model, she warned, because 'to establish in this country a system which proved to be almost unworkable or of which the machinery moved so slowly as to be always in arrears of actual conditions would be to promote rather than abate the evil of sweating'.

In the summer of 1907 Margaret MacDonald and her husband spoke out against minimum wage legislation. The campaign was, they believed, 'a great mistake' and a diversion of their energy away from the 'direct fight for socialism'. It was a 'palliative which in my opinion would not only be ineffective but in some cases positively harmful'. The current agitation for a legal minimum wage had its roots in The Daily News' Exhibition which, according to the MacDonal ds, had been 'the talk of the town' especially when it was discovered that 'His Royal Highness the Duke of York's trousers had been made in a dwelling house where fever was rampant'. For her socialism, and not piecemeal measures, was the answer to the problem of sweated homeworkers: 'Work for Socialism... fight the dragon of private capitalism and competition of which these women and girls are the pitiable victims.' She understood that people wanted to act
without wanting to embrace socialism, which did not, she said, advocate the legal regulation of wages:

If I thought the agitation would really secure that no woman should be paid less than even four pence an hour for her work I should turn aside... But as I say I do not believe that any legal regulation could be efficiently put into force amongst the worst paid workers under our present industrial system. Indeed I believe it would really increase the number of sweated workers, for the minimum wage would be enforced more easily in the factories and workshops than in the home and the unscrupulous employer would put more work out in order to evade the law. (\textsuperscript{11})

The MacDonalds preferred the licensing of homeworkers' homes, although their real goal was its abolition: 'I will not recognise the home as a proper place for work being done.' Strict licensing, they hoped, would eventually drive homework into the factories. (\textsuperscript{47})

In the midst of a torrent of criticism of homeworkers and prescriptions about how they should conduct their lives, a few defenders insisted that the women's own opinions be taken into consideration, and stated the benefits of homework; the most important one being that the mother was able to supervise her children and earn a living at the same time. Even the fiercest critics could not argue against this point: 'Should she be taken from the home and forced into the factory, the house would be closed all day, the children would have no regular meals and would run wild about the streets.' (\textsuperscript{48}) Their defence of homework was important for its survival in the face of a charged atmosphere of abolition. While many of those who suggested measures other than abolition for dealing with the problem, its extinction in the long term was invariably their goal. Edith Lawson, Secretary of the Homeworkers League, (\textsuperscript{49}) deplored the MacDonalds' preference for licensing, and understood the consequences for homeworkers if it became law: 'It will only act to the detriment of the homeworker, for employers will never stand the

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worry of such continual inspection of certificates and will cease to give work out."(50)

During 1907 the discussion of homeworkers' choice of homework over other ways of earning helped correct the stereotypical image of them as pathetic victims and slaves:

The homeworkers' own view is that any and every such money expense, providing their own light, heat etc, is very much more than compensated by the saving in train and tram fares, wear and tear of clothing in all weathers, and avoidance of waste in housekeeping caused by buying in a hurry, buying cooked or tinned foods or paying someone else to do your marketing, washing or cleaning or to care for the children as factory workers have to do. (51)

At last the image of the homeworker was being challenged. Here she is portrayed as a careful manager, a good housekeeper and a responsible mother, a woman in charge of her own life and not the pathetic victim that twenty years of negative stereotyping had constructed. Female homeworkers were not a homogeneous group in their personal circumstances and skills, nor was child labour as oppressive and sweated as it had been portrayed by critics.

In the summer of 1907 Her Royal Highness Princess Louise of Schleswig-Holstein opened the Spitalfields annual flower show in Christ Church Hall in Hanbury Street. The flowers for the exhibition had been grown 'under the greatest difficulties in the district... the plants had been reared in squalid courts and narrow alleys.' The plants were a metaphor for the children of local residents. Between seven and eight hundred seedlings had been given out and only three hundred 'had struggled through life and were on exhibition'. There was also a Baby Show, a recent craze since the publication of the Physical Deterioration Report of 1904. It was, the Rector of Christ Church said, 'a matter of vital importance... of the number entered, five Jewish children and eleven Christian children had taken
prizes'. These prize-winners had disproved the fallacy, he declared, of the generally accepted idea that Jewish babies were stronger and that Jewish mothers were better than their Christian contemporaries. This event in the heart of the worst slum district in London and one of the busiest homeworking districts in the capital, underlined the impact that the Physical Deterioration Report had on the Edwardians' consciousness.

PARLIAMENTARY POLITICS - THE SWEATED INDUSTRIES BILL AND THE HOMEWORK BILL

1908 was the most important year for the politics of homework. It was crammed with political activity: the Children's Act which aimed to eliminate deprivation and neglect extended the state's responsibility for its children; the Old Age Pensions Act provided a weekly pension for the poorest, oldest (over 70), and most respectable citizens; there was lengthy parliamentary debate on the two minimum wage bills; and the publication of evidence, recommendations and conclusions of the House of Commons Committee on Homework.

In an emotional speech Mr Toulmin, the Liberal MP for Bury, introduced the second reading of The Sweated Industries Bill to the House of Commons on February 21st 1908. Its aim was 'to provide for the establishment of Wages Boards with power to fix minimum wages to be paid in particular trades specified in the schedule'. Power was to be granted to the Home Secretary to extend its scope to the sweated trades. The Wages Board was to consist of representatives of the employers and the workers in equal numbers and would be chaired by a man chosen by the Board's members or nominated by the Home Secretary. Factory inspectors would enforce the minimum rates of
pay. Tailoring, dressmaking, shirt-making and altering, trimming and repairing were suggested as the first trades to be covered by the Bill. Toulmin, the Bill's chief sponsor, claimed that it dealt with:

a problem occupying attention in many quarters... the problem is acute, complex and vital. The evil is admitted... here they are men, women and children overworked, underpaid and living in unhealthy and often degrading surroundings.

Homeworkers and other sweated workers were portrayed as inhabiting a kind of hell:

They are enemies of one another because the employer is continually taking advantage of the need of one to undercut the other... Many a home is besieged and it is the last stand of the little garrison that makes them the sweaters' victims... to help keep the home together they shun no exertion, spare no sacrifice, give blood and tissue, drop by drop, nerve by nerve. In this gross darkness, we attempt to say by this Bill, 'Let there be light'.

All waged labour, and indeed the 'race', was being degraded by the work. Homeworkers were portrayed as being adrift, with no legitimate place in the economy and no support except for organisations such as the Homeworkers Aid Association which operated on philanthropic rather than political lines. Women's trade unionism had failed. A political solution was the only answer for such a dangerous problem. Accepting that any interventionist legislation was likely to create new difficulties, the Bill's second speaker, Mr Alden, Liberal MP for Tottenham, Middlesex, urged a study of the precedents set by the Wages Boards in New Zealand and Australia. Sir Frederick Banbury, the Conservative MP for the City of London from whence many Spitalfields homeworkers received employment, opposed the Bill. Banbury said he had no time for sentiment and objected because he opposed any fixing of wages on principle; he did not believe that it could be enforced and he baulked at the idea of
giving power to any political servant to interfere with the trades and occupations of the country. It was, he said:

'an insidious attempt, under the guise of sentimentality or of sympathy... to obtain the sympathy of Honourable Members of the House whose hearts were a little larger than their heads in order to introduce a socialistic measure.'

Debate was fierce and closely argued. At least twenty-four members spoke that day. It was then sent to the Select Committee on Homework which was hearing evidence at the same time. The Government's public stance had been presented in the debate by the Secretary of State for the Home Department, Mr Gladstone:

It must be our endeavour to improve the conditions of homework and make them if possible as tolerable and as productive as the conditions which exist... in the factory world... We have here to deal with a grave and festering evil.

He urged caution before too radical measures were agreed and drew a bizarre parallel between homeworkers and a fever-producing swamp, each incapable of dealing with its difficulties. 'Laissez-faire' economics and legislation had in turn failed sweated workers, especially homeworkers:

They are helpless, miserable and powerless and the time has come for trying to discover some remedy more effective than those which have hitherto been attempted [the Factory and Public Health Acts]... The real evil among these people is the competition not to get more, but to take less. That is the real evil.

Gladstone seemed to be washing his hands of homeworkers and refused any fresh legislation.('0')

Two days earlier he had circulated a document among Cabinet colleagues which he had prepared on the Bill, the contents of which formed the basis of his exchanges in the House of Commons at its second reading. The document reveals senior Liberal attitudes to this issue: 'The great and admitted evil of sweating was so glaring
and so difficult to get at that drastic remedies are necessary.' He believed that as it stood the Bill was unworkable and 'extremely crude... Whenever a difficulty occurs to the framers, the solution appears to have been left to the Home Secretary [himself]' . He stated that a decision would have to be taken whether they as a government would recognise and adopt the principle of Wages Boards. In recent years the practice had been to develop conciliation and arbitration procedures, although he was reluctant to accept the legal minimum wage: 'The proposal to establish Wages Boards recalls old and futile attempts by the State to fix rates; and there is perhaps an ominous sound in the term Wages Boards.'

Gladstone surveyed current political thinking which was at the heart of the Bill. Describing his own party:

The great majority of Liberal members are more or less strongly in favour of the principle... the Labour Party has placed this question next in importance to the granting of Old Age Pensions and the question of the Unemployed. A large section of Conservatives represented by The Morning Post has declared itself wholeheartedly for it. No doubt it will also be supported by the Tariff Reformers who openly declare that social reforms depend upon their fiscal methods and who will argue with plausibility that their tariff will protect minimum wage workers from foreign competition. Under these circumstances the Government will have to consider the course it will take.

He was in favour of referring the Bill to the Select Committee on Homework: 'It is desirable that they should consider in what ways a practical solution can best be worked out.' Financing the operation of the Wages Boards and the enforcement of its rulings had to be considered, but a colleague, Mr Askwith, a barrister with 'unequalled practical experience in trade arbitration and in fixing the rates of piece-workers' does not think that this charge will be considerable. Gladstone's plan was to agree to the Bill's second reading and refer
it to the Select Committee, and that the Government should not be committed any further at that time.\(^{67}\)

The Government's last word on the Sweated Industries Bill in 1908 was given by the Prime Minister, H.H. Asquith, on November 3rd. He said he would not act on the matter in 1908 and would not commit himself on the content of the next parliamentary session's business. Sweated industries, he assured them, was a matter 'that the Government would not lose sight of'.\(^{63}\)

A Bill to provide for the better regulation of home industries was presented to the House of Commons on April 28th 1908 by Mr G.N. Barnes,\(^{64}\) the Labour MP for Blackfriars, Glasgow, and was supported by Mr J. Keir Hardie, the Labour MP for Merthyr Tydfil. The Bill had been around since 1899, drafted by the Women's Industrial Council and the Scottish Council for Women's Trades. Attempting to make existing factory and workshop legislation more effective, the Bill made it illegal for:

any employer in and by any way of trade to give out any work or materials for the performance of any work in any trade or industry to any persons to be done in any dwelling house unless such a person is in possession of a certificate granted to... her under the provisions of this Act.

Homeworkers would apply to the local authority for a certificate stating that their homes were fit premises for work. Inspection was required before it was granted on condition that they were 'suitable for the purposes and are adequately lighted and in... a cleanly and wholesome condition... and free from infection'. The certificates had to be granted only to the homeworker who applied for them in person, and renewed every six months. It was envisaged that sanitary and factory inspectors would work together and ensure that there were no gaps in enforcement. Homeworkers who refused to provide the names and addresses of their employers to any inspector were liable to a
fine of five pounds, and those who worked with false certificates were also to be fined five pounds. The draughtsmen of this Bill were confident that it would regulate homework more effectively, but their optimism in amending existing legislation was not shared by many in the House of Commons. It made no progress, it was only presented and was not read and discussed at length. Overshadowed by its rival proposal - the Sweated Industries Bill, it failed to progress beyond its second reading. 

HOMEWORK AND THE HOUSE: THE COMMONS SELECT COMMITTEE, 1907-1908

The National Anti-Sweating League's campaign was a success. The House of Commons Select Committee on Homework was appointed in the summer of 1907. Its terms of reference were:

To report upon the condition of labour in trades in which homework is prevalent and the proposals, including those for the establishment of Wages Boards and the licensing of workplaces, which have been made for the remedying of existing abuses.

Evidence was presented to the twenty-one members of the Committee on sixteen days throughout that summer. (See Appendix L) The Chairman was Sir Thomas Whittaker, described by The Liverpool Post as 'one of the leading social reformers of our day'. He was the Liberal MP for the Spen Valley in Yorkshire, had written pamphlets on social and economic questions, particularly temperance reform, his business interests were the hardware trade and he had been a member of a recent Royal Commission on Licensing Laws. (See Appendix M)

The witnesses who gave evidence to the Committee included the leading female figures of the anti-sweating movement: Misses Collet, Tuckwell, Squire, Irwin, MacArthur, Black and Mrs Ramsay MacDonald.
Drawing on their knowledge of homework these women, and the other witnesses who were called, ensured that the Wages Boards and the licensing of homeworkers' premises schemes received an airing. The witnesses examined during 1907 and 1908 tended to come down in favour of one scheme over the other, when in fact certain strands of both proposals had merit. The weight of evidence was so great and the political interest in the subject so widespread that the Committee was re-appointed to sit during the parliamentary session of 1908. Homeworkers' rates of pay; their weekly earnings; their homes; Wages Boards licensing; the factory and workshop conditions of trades where homeworkers were also used; and the Australian and New Zealand experiments to deal with their sweated labour problems were discussed.

The Report's authors acknowledged that they were commenting on the current situation in a statistical vacuum. They were not able to say whether sweating was greater or less than it had been twenty years earlier. What they could say was that: 'Sweating still exists in such a degree as to call urgently for the interference of Parliament.' The numbers of sweated homeworkers were undoubtedly large and 'it is still true that the evils of sweating are very great'.

The Committee described three types of homeworker: those who worked from home and employed other homeworkers to come and work in their homes; those who worked in their own homes and who employed members of their own family; and those who did not employ any others and who worked for others in their own homes. The first two types were in theory within the legislative framework of the Factory and Workshop Act of 1901. It was the third category to which the Committee had addressed closest attention. This included the kind of
homeworkers to be found in Spitalfields. Within this group three identifiable groups were found: firstly, 'single women, widows, wives deserted or separated from their husbands, and wives whose husbands are ill or unable to work; secondly, wives who did homework when their husbands were unemployed and had to take any work that was available at whatever rates were offered; and thirdly, those who did it for 'pin-money', 'the wives and daughters of men in regular employment who wish to increase the family income. They usually select the pleasant work and do not... work very long hours'.(70)

On March 19th 1908 six homeworkers from London and one factory worker from a provincial town, gave their evidence to the Committee in private. Mrs A was a blouse-maker; Misses B, C and D were baby linen-makers; Mrs E was a tennis-ball coverer; Mrs F a shirt-maker and Mrs G a shirt-finisher. Fear of victimisation and loss of livelihood necessitated their anonymity. None were stated as coming from the East End. One might assume that their anonymous evidence was more truthful and reliable than the seven who gave their details on April 1st. Mary MacArthur, who had brought these homeworkers to the Committee assured the Chairman, Sir Thomas Whittaker, that they were 'fairly typical, but not exactly typical; in four cases they are above the average and in two cases they are under the average'. She swore that they were not 'sample horrible cases' that she had avoided choosing those. They were all bona fide cases whom she was prepared to vouch for.(71)

The six women told the familiar story of low pay, ranging from four shillings and six pence a week to thirteen shillings a week; long hours; erratic supplies of work and being kept waiting at the warehouse for work; having to provide their own materials, heat and light; ignorance of rates of pay they would receive and of the prices
their work sold for and deductions for spoilt work. In other words, exploitation of the most widespread kind. The majority had a number of dependents and they had all experienced a decline in wages in recent years. MacArthur described the difficulties in persuading these women to come and give evidence, even anonymously: 'Some of them are nervous about it. One I hoped to bring at the last moment would not come. She was so frightened and she became hysterical so I thought I had better not bring her.' Those who had come were 'interested and very nervous'. Some useful insights were gained. Mrs A blamed male unemployment for the fall in wages: 'So many men are out of work... women are always applying for work and they [the firms] have no work to give out and therefore they cut the prices down because the women go and beg for work.' Mrs B explained how they were unable to refuse work offered to them even when the lowest rates were offered: 'You must take it or have the sack; if you do not take the article they give you, they tell you you can go, that they can get other workers.'

The women were asked for their opinions on Wages Boards and licensing. Mrs A:

I do not see that it would do us any good at all; it is only for the benefit of the people who would buy the articles in the way of preventing infection but the workers would get no benefit and it would not alter our conditions at all.

The majority favoured Wages Boards.

Two weeks later on the 1st April, seven female homeworkers from different parts of the country, who were prepared to give their names, addresses and evidence in public, were brought to the Select Committee by Miss Vynne who represented the National Homeworkers League (motto: 'Hold Fast'). This organisation had been founded in 1901 and its aim was to protect homeworkers from legislation, which
would decrease the amount of work given out, and lower wages. The witnesses made ladies' underlinen (Chiswick); paper bags (Glasgow); artificial flowers (Clerkenwell); corsets (Leicester and Bristol); cut files (Sheffield); tailored (Leeds). They all enthusiastically expressed a preference for homework over factory work. Also, family commitments meant that homework was a convenient employment. Given that they were prepared to give their names and evidence in public, and were selected and taken there by the National Homeworkers League representative, it is not surprising that as a group they said that they were satisfied with their current rates of pay. Any criticism was bound to have annoyed their employers and threatened their livelihood. They were opposed to any legislative interference, especially the Wages Board scheme, which they feared would equalise the skilled and unskilled rates of pay. Miss Eliza Cooper (ladies' underlinen-maker) thought that Wages Boards were:

rather unjust... I think any change would make it harder to get work. If there was no alteration in any way we should be perfectly satisfied. I do not think it [Wages Boards] would raise them [wages] in our case... they pay us very well, and we are very well satisfied."

Mrs Brophy (paper bag-maker) was against any legislative interference with her livelihood: 'I think it would be awful and would interfere with us because it means poverty for a good few of us if we are not able to earn something to help the husbands.' She admitted that she did not really understand how Wages Boards would work, but was sure that she and her fellow homeworkers would be harmed:

I think it would harm me... I cannot really give an idea about it but I think it would be killing myself and other people... I think it would be awfully cruel to take our homework away because it would mean desolation not to a few people but to a good many."

Her attitude was typical.
These seven witnesses feared that Wages Boards would drive homework out of existence altogether and that they would find it impossible to take up factory work. One woman, Mrs Somerset, a filecutter, claimed that her health had never been better since she had taken up file-cutting: 'I hope that homework will not be stopped because I could not go into a factory.' (80) Mrs King (artificial flower-maker) was pleased with her wages and feared that slower homeworkers would be the first casualty of Wages Boards:

I think if the pay was made general it would affect the very slow ones who would not be able to earn the money. They would not be wanted especially in our work. We take it out daily, it has to be got from one day to another... the slow hands would not get the work. I think it would ruin the slow hands entirely and the quick hands would lose by it because they would be classed as medium hands.

Mrs King shared the views of all the witnesses that Wages Boards were a primitive measure. We need to consider how far their stated views fully represented their own views, and how much they had been informed by their employers, or were stating what they thought the Committee wanted to hear. It was in the employers' interests to scare-monger amongst homeworkers; and those who operated on tight profit margins could have gone out of business if legally enforced minimum wages were introduced. Mrs King epitomised the attitudes encouraged by many employers:

We are well satisfied with our prices and I do not think we ought to be interfered with in any way... If they [the slowest workers] were not allowed to get their living they will have to go to the workhouse. (81)

Despite efforts by the Committee members to explain the workings of Wages Boards, these witnesses remained opposed to the idea. A clue to the power of the employers' influence was given by Mrs Somerset:

The master I work for now is a gentleman, and I should not like to do him any harm by punishing him for the sake of punishing others... If he was to be punished he would turn all the hands away and would not employ anyone. (82)
All their evidence and that of the anonymous homeworkers has to be seen in the light of this remark. The parting shot came from Mrs King: 'I hope they will not stop the homework.'

In 1908 the Committee recommended that Wages Boards and the licensing of homeworkers' premises be the subject of legislation. Initially this legislation should be 'tentative and experimental' and apply only to tailoresses, shirt-makers, underclothing and baby linen-makers. Significantly, the Committee only recommended that women homeworkers should be liable for the licensing of their premises as fit workplaces. It is relevant that these recommendations were framed specifically for female homeworkers, and not men who, according to this report's conclusions, were not the problem. And yet their homes could be just as squalid as a female homeworker's premises. It was urged that it be made an offence to pay or offer to pay lower rates of pay to women homeworkers in these trades. It was also proposed that sanitary and factory inspectors be given the right to visit private dwellings where homework was done if it was suspected that the premises were dirty, badly ventilated or overcrowded. The Chairman, Sir Thomas Whittaker, clarified why they had focused on 'helpless and unorganised' women homeworkers as a priority:

Their case is the most difficult and urgent and they are individually and collectively the least able to help themselves and consequently most need the assistance of legislation.

He revealed that while there had been a general feeling among the Committee that it was undesirable to make any difference in the law regarding the sex of the homeworkers, it was also felt that: 'the number of men homeworkers whose rates of payment would be expected to be determined by these boards are extremely few'.

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The abolition lobby was active throughout the Committee's proceedings and its views had been presented to them. James Samuelson, a barrister at the Middle Temple with an interest in labour movements, published in 1908 The Lament of the Sweated. Using the vocabulary of Motherhood, Race and Empire he described homeworkers thus:

They live in overcrowded rooms or cellars where they work and sleep in a fetid atmosphere and rear unhealthy offspring... it seems desirable therefore that as far as possible the workers should be removed from their confined dwellings and enabled to carry on their industries in commodious workrooms.

He urged municipal authorities and private individuals to provide workshops and crèches so that: women could work in a healthier environment; children would be better cared for and kept off the streets; middlewomen in such work arrangements would suffer a loss of profits; and Wages Boards could be more easily introduced and effected if homeworkers worked in such places and were not isolated in their own homes."

The Select Committee felt that to attempt to prohibit homework was too drastic a step. Not all homework was done in dire conditions, Whittaker insisted. Their earnings, however meagre, supplemented the family budget and certain rural home industries were often completed in healthy conditions. Abolition was too big a leap into the dark: 'it could only be achieved under grave public necessity and [it] has certainly not yet been proved.' "A levelling-up of the rates of payment with those paid by the best employers and a reduction in cut-throat competition amongst some employers, caused by competition, he hoped, would be an immediate and a long-term result of minimum wage legislation. Mutual agreements without a legal framework and
financial penalties would not suffice, he maintained: 'the force of law behind it is necessary to render it effective.'

The Lancet reported the National Anti-Sweating League's activities with interest and shared their concern about the suspected links between homework, infant mortality and race deterioration. While the Committee had been hearing evidence the League had continued to organise exhibitions of sweated workers to increase awareness of the problem and gather support for their plans for minimum wage legislation. New branches were started in Oxford, London and Manchester and in December, they sent 'a very representative deputation to ask the Prime Minister for legislation to deal with the problem of homework'. During that year opinion had shifted among their Executive Committee and their visit to Asquith indicated a sharper concern over homework. Members of the deputation, which numbered nearly forty, included: the established and Non-Conformist churches; the Chief Rabbi; representatives of all three political parties; leading female activists like Gertrude Tuckwell, Clementina Black, Mary MacArthur, Mrs Sidney Webb, Sir Thomas Whittaker, Mr T. Holmes, the Earl of Dunraven and the Archbishop of Canterbury, who introduced the deputation and said their aim was to emphasise that sweated labour was not only an industrial problem but a national and moral question. Prime Minister Asquith agreed in principle to the idea of minimum wage legislation, although at that stage he was not prepared to allocate any parliamentary time to it. He admitted that this was 'the most pressing and at the same time a most difficult problem'. He guardedly announced his support for Wages Boards 'subject to those preliminary limitations' and assured them that the Government was entirely in sympathy with their aims and objectives. Perhaps it might be possible, he suggested:
To devise the machinery of that kind [Wages Boards] properly equipped, prompt and effective in its action, and at the same time with the minimum friction and maximum of consideration in regard to all the interests concerned. (91)

On December 19th 1908, The Lancet launched a scathing attack on the state of the sweating and homework debate, blaming the Government's lethargy, not a lack of public interest. Disappointed that their professional expertise and concern had not been given sufficient representation on the Select Committee, it took issue with the kind of witnesses chosen to give evidence:

On the whole the sanitary side of the problem was unduly subordinated to the industry and these two factors [public health and work] were inextricably blended in the practice of homework where the physical and economic welfare of the homeworker were strictly interdependent.

The entire community stood to benefit from minimum wage legislation:

Better nutrition and better clothes for mothers and children will result in increased resistance to disease among the class which at present forms a focus of varied infection.

The Lancet's professional pride had been hurt at not being called upon to play a central role on the Select Committee when it had sounded the alarm bells in 1884. It concluded its article with a veiled reference to the lack of independence, and possibilities of corruption, among Medical Officers of Health and urged the Government to act on this matter so that: 'the security of tenure of the Medical Officers of Health should cease to be dependent on private interests and caprice.' (92)

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FEMALE POVERTY AND WOMEN'S POLITICS: THE WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT AND HOMEWORKING

The women's suffrage movement, founded in the 1860s, joined the army of commentators on homework during the Edwardian years. Focusing on women's low pay and the poverty which drove them to take up homework, the three main organisations, the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (N.U.W.S.S.), the Women's Social and Political Union (W.S.P.U.), and the Women's Freedom League (W.F.L.), underlined the links between starvation wages, poverty and prostitution. ¹⁹³ They insisted that only the enfranchisement of women, and ensuing legislation, would tackle these problems.

The constitutional and non-militant N.U.W.S.S. (whose members were known as 'suffragists') were the most frequent articulators of contemporary concerns about motherhood, race and Empire, and in particular the threat that women's sweated labour posed to the nation's future:

We want to protect... the little children from the suffering that comes from starvation wages and the overwork of mothers... we remember that vice and slums and sweated work are together destroying our children by the thousands and sending others out into the world unfit for the struggle of life. We ask ourselves what use it is to have such a mighty Empire if its citizens are to be stunted and corrupted by evil surroundings when they are growing up... We want votes to HELP PUT THESE THINGS RIGHT. ⁴⁹⁴

Female trade unionism would improve, the government's sweating of women workers would be eradicated, and women would become better citizens, the N.U.W.S.S. confidently predicted, only when women had the vote. ⁹⁵

The militant wing of the campaign, the W.S.P.U. (whose members were known as 'suffragettes' from March 1906 onwards) and the W.F.L., a group which broke away from the W.S.P.U. in 1907 after a dispute...
with the co-founders and leaders, Mrs Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel Pankhurst, both wove the issue of homework into their campaigns, pointing out the arrogance of the demands to prohibit married women's labour. The W.S.P.U., infuriated by the President of the Local Government Board, John Burns’s 1907 view that 'women's labour, especially married women's labour, be enormously curtailed', used the issues of sweating and homework as an emotive vehicle for their platform which highlighted the low pay endemic in all women's work, the increasingly frequent attacks on women's right to work, and prostitution - which was seen as the logical and inevitable result of women's starvation wages. The W.S.P.U.'s Treasurer, Mrs Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, had been a member of the The Daily News' Sweated Industries Exhibition Committee which demanded legislation 'to deal with this evil' of sweated labour.

Charlotte Despard, co-founder and leader of the W.F.L., stressed the illogicality of the many complaints, usually from men, that women undercut men's wages by taking in homework:

As a fact he was the first aggressor. He has taken away her work, he has forced her out of doors; for the home he has substituted the factory. And now he tells her the factory is his, and that she, be she wife, widow, or maid, must not interfere with him there. The home which he has deprived of her interest and use, is hers; the factory and the shop are his.

The years 1905-1908 yielded most opportunity for propaganda and political action. The women's suffrage movement provided a bedrock of support for the recognition of certain problems associated with homework. The available literature of the three main organisations suggests no support for the abolition of homework, rather a confidence that the vote would be a panacea to ameliorate the circumstances which necessitated women taking it up, and as a means of having a voice in the framing of legislation which would deal with
particular difficulties. Until women had the vote, each argued, they had none or very limited access to those who devised laws, debated them and passed them. All legislation, they stressed, affected women's lives, especially poor women's lives, and here homeworkers were the prime example of a group in the most urgent need of the vote. Interestingly, the scope of the suffragists' and the suffragettes' demand for the vote was extremely conservative: in order to breach the sex barrier in the suffrage they were prepared to accept votes for half a million women, the rest of their inevitably poorer 'sisters' would be enfranchised in stages. Breaking the mould of male politics was the priority. The case of the poor homeworker was a brick in the wall of the women's suffrage argument.

THE IMPACT OF WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS

During the years 1905 - 1908 various women's organisations saw their propaganda activities come to some fruition. The friendships and political alliances they had made with certain Members of Parliament stood them in good stead in the aftermath of the publication of the Select Committee's recommendations on homework in the summer of 1908. These years were not a saga of smooth progress. Gertrude Tuckwell agreed with the women's suffrage campaigners that the vote was crucial, but sensed that in 1906 there was a feeling of over-exposure and guilt about homeworkers:

Accounts of the suffering of these workers, graphic description of their homes, of life supported by the making of matchboxes at two pence half penny a gross, of sack-making at five pence a dozen, have figured in the public Press until one becomes ashamed to lay bare any more of these sordid details.
Also, sensitive to homeworkers' feelings: 'Why should we outrage the pride that can exist even on five pence a day to make sensations for a public that really knows?' and called on the Liberal Government, which had recently won a landslide victory, to act immediately on two of the most serious consequences of homework, the starvation wages and the ruination of their homes:

We [the W.T.U.L.] want to see the question of a living wage... seriously grappled with on the lines which have already proven successful, by experimental application of a Wage Board system to selected trades [already in operation in New Zealand and Australia] and... We want the unequal incidence of the Factory Workshop Act amended so that the employers shall no longer escape all responsibility to their workers by sending the work to make the home a hell.

1906 had been 'a successful and eventful one' for the Women's Trade Union League. Involved with the organization of The Daily News' Sweated Industries Exhibition, Gertrude Tuckwell and Mary MacArthur also worked for the National Anti-Sweating League. Closely allied with the W.T.U.L. was the National Federation of Women Workers, founded and led by Mary MacArthur in 1906, which aimed: 'To help... poor women, too isolated to join trade unions already in existence.' It was modelled on the type of unions which had first come into existence in the 1890s. The subscription was low, it had a strike-fund and helped women on strike, the membership was unskilled, not representative of any one trade, and all female. The Federation waged a war on two fronts: firstly, to get women organized and to increase its membership; and secondly, to promote legislation to fix minimum wages for women in the worst sweated trades. The problem of sweated labour was the major plank in its platform. It was hoped the Federation would succeed where the rest of the women's trade union movement had failed. Within two years it had a membership of over two thousand, and seventeen branches in England and Scotland,
including two in the East End, Hoxton and Whitechapel. The Trades Union Congress held in Liverpool in 1906 threw its weight behind the demand for a legal minimum wage with the resolution: 'That this Conference believing that the low rate of wages in organised trades is directly responsible for a proportion of unemployment calls upon the Government to give facilities for legislation to establish a legal minimum wage in selected trades.'\(^{(103)}\) The League despaired at local authorities' failure to enforce adequately the various clauses of the 1901 Factory and Workshop Act, although they accepted that the Act was largely inoperable because of the lack of staff to inspect and follow up all the homeworkers' names on their lists, or even find others not listed. Setting up Wages Boards was the League's preferred remedy for homework.\(^{(104)}\) Mary MacArthur worked for both the W.T.U.L. and the National Federation of Women Workers, speaking to the Whitechapel branch of the latter on several occasions.\(^{(105)}\) The W.T.U.L. was closely involved with the National Anti-Sweating League and provided speakers for meetings all over the country, helped them organise sweating exhibitions and canvassed for Parliamentary support for the Sweated Industries Bill.\(^{(106)}\)

In 1906 the Women's Industrial Council published an interim report of their inquiry (which concluded in 1908) on: 'The development and present condition of Home Work in relation to the legal protection of the workers and some account of foreign experiments in legislation.'\(^{(107)}\) It was a follow-up study to their investigation of 1897 which had provided the earliest data on London's homeworkers. The case studies had been reduced to forty-four, and ten years later they had found that conditions were much the same as ten years ago, but that rents had risen. Wages in 1906 were at starvation level: 'The fact is undeniable that these women are not paid for their work
a wage upon which they can actually subsist... nor is this because they are undeserving.' The middle-class judgements of 1897 persisted and the investigators noted that: 'Many of them are of the highest respectability and maintain a standard of conduct and cleanliness quite heroic.' The majority of the women were 'industrious' and most were 'thoroughly respectable... their case is not exceptional. It is the case of many hundreds in London alone, of many thousands in the kingdom at large'.

Clementina Black issued the report with a stern warning to everyone:

To whom are not shoes sent home in boxes? Who does not buy matches or tin tacks or toothbrushes? Whose coals and potatoes are not put into sacks, and whose retail purchases are not put into paper bags? There is no person in this Kingdom - nor in any of the states that are called civilised - who does not partake of underpaid labour and the conditions of such labour are not growing better, they are if anything growing worse and under-payment is rather spreading than decreasing.

The report included the Women's Industrial Council's well-known support for the licensing of homeworkers' homes. Although they and their political friends had drafted and promoted the first Home Industries Bill in 1899, they could not express a corporate opinion on Wages Boards. They welcomed more information about the idea, but felt that homework in England was a different and more serious problem than that experienced in the colonies:

'It must always be remembered that our conditions and our evils are more deeply rooted than those of the new countries which have tried such experiments. Yet present conditions are so bad that we cannot afford to overlook any proposal towards their amelioration. (109)

Closer links were maintained between the Women's Industrial Council and the National Anti-Sweating League throughout 1908. Mary MacArthur, speaking to a League meeting at the Queen's Hall in
January, reminded them of their duty to homeworkers' children and Empire:

It is primarily on behalf of the children that we are here today... the overworked, under-nourished woman is the greatest menace to the prosperity of the nation. Statesmen talk of the sun which never sets; we are more mundane, we think of the wages which never rise. We are the true Imperialists. (110)

The Women's Industrial Council's investigation into homeworkers in London was completed in 1908 and the report contained a number of clues as to its political agenda. The 'Chief Points of Enquiry for the Investigators' included the following tasks and questions:

Describe the appearance of the worker, the room, or the street; Is the worker in receipt of Poor Relief? Does the worker like her life? Effect of the work on her health; Have any cases of infectious disease occurred whilst the industry is being carried on? If so have the local inspectors disinfected goods or destroyed them? Has compensation been made? How much housework does she do? and How many children? They were also to note if the women were of a good class, or rough, whether young or married, healthy or clean-looking or the reverse. (111)

There was a long-running debate within the Women's Industrial Council during 1906 -1908 about homework and sweated labour. Clementina Black favoured minimum wage legislation, whereas Margaret MacDonald opposed it, seeing it as a legal way of keeping wages low. For her, negotiated rates of pay and the licensing of homeworkers' premises was the answer. (112) Clementina Black, Margaret MacDonald and Mary MacArthur were the three most vocal activists in the homework debate at this point in its history, and their biographical details reveal that the political views and solutions they favoured were by no means accidental. Firstly, the most experienced female
commentator on homework, Black, had associated with Socialists and Fabians in the early 1880s and studied women's working conditions in the East End of London. During the 1880s she promoted change via militant trade unionism. As Secretary of the Women's Protective and Provident League she renamed it the Women's Trade Union League. Her revelations helped to spark off the Match Girls' Strike. In 1889 she founded the Women's Trade Union Association from which the Women's Industrial Council was formed in 1894. She edited the Women's Industrial News and directed the work of the Council's investigation sub-committee into the working conditions of women workers. Importantly, she was on the Executive Committee of the National Anti-Sweating League and was a keen supporter of women's suffrage. Margaret MacDonald was a committed Christian. Her experience of social work, and membership of the Independent Labour Party and marriage to James Ramsay MacDonald in 1896 informed the work she undertook for the Women's Industrial Council and her stance on sweated labour and especially homework. Mary MacArthur's background made it highly likely that she would take up the cause of wages boards. She had had a full time career as Secretary of the Ayr branch of the Shop Assistant's Union and was President of its Scottish Council. She was Secretary of the Women's Trade Union League from 1903. As an eye-witness to many kinds of sweated labour, including homework, she had a major role in forming the National Anti-Sweating League. Despite the differences of opinion between them, and probably because of them, these three major players ensured that the issue of homework did not fade from the public's awareness and remained a live political issue.

By the mid Edwardian years, 1906 - 1908, the Women's Industrial Council, which was one group within social feminism whose long term...
aim was to bring about reforms to improve women's economic and political position, reflected the differences of opinion in wider political circles over how best to deal with women's sweated labour and homework. The W.I.C. leadership and the membership could not all agree that Wages Boards or Trade Boards were the answer. Their differences of opinion were most clearly seen when Clementina Black and Margaret MacDonald reached opposite conclusions. The Council's efforts, which had spanned more than a decade, had by 1906 ensured that parliamentary leaders and the public had become concerned over the wider implications of sweated work in general and homework in particular. Their policy was informed by their empirical studies on female homeworkers in 1897 and in 1906. Despite the polarisation of views most clearly seen in 1908, the Wages Board idea took root and a broad spectrum of social reformers, including the majority of the Women's Industrial Council, supported the idea of minimum wages in certain trades. Even though the W.I.C. was divided as to what was best for homeworkers and the public, licensing versus minimum wage legislation, these differences did not affect their activities, but did lead to Black's temporary resignation from the presidency in January 1906. So committed was she to the minimum wage that she said that she could not continue as their leader until wages boards were implemented. Support for a minimum wage was widespread and across party political lines, its main opponents were the MacDonalds whose opposition was rooted in the belief that it would not work in trades where a large number of the workforce were homeworkers. In a letter from Margaret MacDonald to Clementina Black in December 1908 she stated that while they were probably 'most united on the general principle of the desirability of a minimum wage' it was 'on the detail of legislation we are at cross purposes. You believe a
minimum wage can be successfully worked out in homework trades. We believe to accept this is worse than a waste of time... and an obstacle to progress'. When the Select Committee on Homework recommended that a legal minimum wage be set for women in some of the home industries, Black failed in her attempt to get the Women's Industrial Council to pass a resolution not to limit trade boards or wages boards to homeworkers. (117)

Founded in 1906, the Women's Labour League was a campaigning group committed to getting more Labour MPs elected to the House of Commons, (118) which joined the political scene at a crucial time in the homework debate. Some of their senior members were leading figures in the Women's Trade Union League and the Women's Industrial Council. The League debated both the options under discussion, and Mary MacArthur addressed their conference in 1907 arguing strongly for wages boards. She engaged in an angry correspondence with Margaret MacDonald. Both women spoke for their chosen preferences on several occasions to League members and in 1908 they followed Mary MacArthur's lead and urged the Government to introduce trade boards. Even though they supported her stance, MacArthur resigned from the executive early in 1908. Strong personalities and their disputes with one another stultified much of this organization's activities. (119)

The Women's Labour League provided another forum for discussion on homework in the sweating debate and experienced the same polarisation of views as did the other organizations which had concerned themselves with the 'problem of homework' and how best to deal with it. Commentators tended to express a preference for one remedy over the other, as if they had been instructed so to do. Perhaps the best way forward would have been to adopt both sets of measures.
Undoubtedly the cost of two regulatory bodies, one for setting up wages boards, and another layer of local and national bureaucracy to supervise the licensing of homeworkers' homes, was the main factor behind the either/or approach in discussions. Politically it may have been deemed unacceptable to have two kinds of State interference with individuals' lives and livelihoods.

Social feminists and women trade union leaders were just as influenced by the Motherhood, Race and Empire concerns as any, and in some cases more so. (120) The mix of politics and personalities in a period when the government had committed itself somewhat reluctantly to minimal gestures of social reform, ensured that the 'scandal' of the wages of homeworkers, many of them the mothers of the nation's assets, would shortly reach a legislative conclusion.

During the years 1906 - 1908, and beyond the passing of the Trade Boards Act in 1909, the various women's organisations, with a total of sixty years of experience and knowledge of all aspects of women's industrial conditions, and acknowledged expertise in homework matters, played the key role in its debate. Clementina Black and Mary MacArthur were formidable figures in the homework debate and must take the credit for the events of 1909, the defining period in the politics and policy of homework.
CHAPTER 5

GOVERNMENT AND SWEATED LABOUR: THE 1909 ACT

THE TRADE BOARDS ACT OF 1909

On the 20th October 1909 a Bill 'for the establishment of Trade Boards for industries in which the evils known as 'sweating' largely prevail' received the Royal Assent in the House of Commons and became law on the 1st January 1910. The Trade Boards Act of 1909, accompanied by the feeling that it was a radical step into the unknown, legislated for minimum rates of pay in ready-made wholesale cardboard box-making, chain-making and machine-made lace- and net-finishing. The minimum time rates were set neither uniformly nor quickly - it was not until 1914 that all the minimum hourly rates of pay had been set and put into practice: three-pence farthing per hour in ready-made wholesale tailoring; two-pence half-penny per hour in chain-making; three-pence an hour in cardboard box-making and two-pence three-farthings in lace- and net-finishing. The Tailoring Trade Board, which represented the greatest number of sweated workers of all descriptions - whether they were in factories, workshops or were homeworkers, did not set its minimum rates of pay until 1912, which were not made obligatory until 1913. Only one rate was set in each of the four trades irrespective of the variety of processes involved. While this legislation was not framed exclusively for the benefit of homeworkers in these trades, it was envisaged that
they would be the first and most numerous beneficiaries of the Act, as these were industries which had a large homeworking force integral to their mode of production. The Act included scope for further trade boards to be established in other low-paid industries in the future if necessary. Of the four trades scheduled in the Act, the women of Spitalfields in the ready-made tailoring and cardboard box-making trades would, in theory, be the first to be affected by this new legislation.

The Government department responsible for the Act was the Board of Trade, and the Bill was steered through the House of Commons by its President, Winston Churchill. His papers reveal that the detailed preparatory work had been under way for at least six months. Churchill's Permanent Secretary at the Board of Trade, Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith, predicted in August 1908, that 'the question of the sweated trades will give some trouble next year [1909] after the report of the Select Committee on Home-Workers' and noted that 'a preliminary question is whether the Government mean to do anything... in any case it is well to study the problem and its various attempted solutions and this I am doing'. At the end of the year [1908] Churchill had written to Prime Minister Asquith that he would be in London from January 5th, working continuously on the two issues at the top of his personal agenda, labour exchanges and the sweated trades. The next day Asquith had informed Churchill that he was appointing his own brother-in-law Jack, [H.J. Tennant], as Churchill's Parliamentary Secretary at the Board of Trade. This was a crucial appointment, the significance of which would not have been missed by those who had been active and vocal in the homework debate for at least two decades, and in particular the Women's Trade
Union League and the Women's Industrial Council. Asquith explained Tennant's suitability for the post:

He has a very direct knowledge of labour questions. He has been Chairman of a number of Home Office Departmental Committees and in these matters he has advanced views. His wife [Mary Tennant, née Abraham, one of the first two women factory inspectors] is in my opinion by far the most capable of the women who have given their brains and lives to industrial reform. He is quite... a good speaker, is on the Chairman's panel for Select Committees, and being a rich man, with business training and connections, would be persona grata to the City and to Capital... I do not believe you could do better.  

Replying to Asquith within forty-eight hours, Churchill gave his wholehearted approval to Tennant's appointment and at the same time made an impassioned plea for the cause of social reform, of which minimum wages would be one element:

I feel impelled to state to you the conviction that has for a long time past been forming in my mind. There is a tremendous policy in Social Organisation. The need is urgent and the moment ripe. Germany with a harsher climate and far less accumulated wealth has managed to establish tolerable basic conditions for her people... we have the miseries which this winter is inflicting upon the poorer classes to back us. And oddly enough the very class of legislation which is required is just the kind the House of Lords will not dare to oppose.  

The resultant Trade Boards, which represented this country's first minimum wage legislation, were given a broad remit:

A Trade Board for any trade shall consider as occasion requires any matter referred to them by a Secretary of State, the Board of Trade, or any other Government department with reference to the industrial conditions of the trade and shall make a report upon the matter to the department by whom the question has been referred. 

The powers given to them were remarkably comprehensive:

Trade Boards shall... fix minimum rates of wages for time work for their trades in this Act referred to as minimum time rates and may also fix in general rates of wages for piece-work for their trades in this Act referred to as general minimum piece rates, and those rates of wages (whether time or piece rates) may apply to any such special process in the work of the trade or to any special class of workers in the trade or any special area.
To appease employers, opportunities for discussion of the proposed rates were written into the Act: 'Before fixing any minimum time rates or general minimum piece rate, the Trade Board shall give notice of the rate which they propose to fix and consider any objections to the rate which may be lodged with them within three months.' The Board of Trade could direct the trade boards to cancel or vary or reconsider the time or piece rates if they thought it was 'expedient' even if the employers or the workers in the scheduled trades had not applied for them to do so.

The composition of the trade boards was stipulated by the Board of Trade. Membership of each board was to 'consist of members representing employers and workers'. Women were eligible as members, and this point was explicit in the sections of the Act dealing with its Constitution and Proceedings. The workers or representative members as they were described in the Act were to be 'elected or nominated or partly elected and partly nominated'. Homeworkers, it was stated specifically, were to be represented on the trade boards in all the trades in which 'a considerable proportion of homeworkers are engaged'. This was the first reference to homeworkers in a piece of legislation. The Chairman and Secretary of each board was appointed by the Board of Trade whose control was written into the framework of this Act. It could make regulations about proceedings, voting methods, and could appoint officers to investigate any complaints and 'secure the proper observance of this Act'. These officers had special powers regarding homeworkers; could demand employers produce wages sheets or other records of wages paid to them; require their names and addresses; enter 'at all reasonable times... any factory or workshop and any place used for giving outwork to outworkers'; and could inspect and copy information from
any list of outworkers and homeworkers kept by an employer or others who employed outworkers and homeworkers. Anyone who refused to supply this information to the officers or who 'molested' them in the exercise of their duties: 'shall be liable on summary conviction in respect of each offence to a fine not exceeding five pounds', and those who deliberately provided false information were liable to a twenty-pound fine or up to three months in prison, with or without hard labour. While the penalties for refusing to pay the rates laid down by the trade board were hardly draconian for the larger employers, a fine of twenty pounds for each offence, and an additional five pounds for each day the offence was continued, they were daunting for the smaller wholesaler who knew that much of the work they sub-contracted out to homeworkers was often sub-contracted again. Once convicted, employers could be liable to pay the wages considered due to the employees. In theory this was a good idea, but in practice the rates were easily evaded and the possible intimidation of homeworkers meant that collusion between masters and workers ensured that the inspectorate remained ignorant of the true situation. Homework's long history of secrecy ensured that many of the women this Act was supposed to help stayed beyond reach.

ACTION FOR 'DISEASED AND PARASITIC' TRADES

Churchill's Cabinet papers of January 1909 provide further insights into the politics of the proposed Trade Boards Bill. One revealed the undoubted importance of certain socio-familial-political networks which were influencing government policy. The Prime Minister had recently received an 'influential deputation' of the key personalities in the debate on sweated labour and homeworking which
included; Mrs Tennant (Asquith's sister-in-law); the Archbishop of Canterbury; Sir Charles Dilke; Sidney Webb; Lord Dunraven and Mr G. Barnes M.P. Their support for trade boards was duly noted and Asquith had given 'considerable encouragement' to their proposals. Prior to January 1909 the Home Secretary, Viscount Gladstone, had made it clear that he and the Home Office wanted this matter under the control of the Board of Trade and not under the aegis of the factory inspectorate. Trade boards were seen as a development of the province of the idea of Boards of Arbitration rather than belonging in the arena of factory law. Existing factory staff and administrative structures were not deemed suitable for this kind of work. The Board of Trade and the Home Office and 'other experts' had already discussed this matter carefully, he intimated. Low paid factory workers and homeworkers alike would be protected by the Bill. Because most of the trades under discussion were 'women's trades'... 'it is proposed that at least one member must be a woman'. The scheme was to be financed out of 'Imperial funds' as no other sources of monies were available. Churchill did not anticipate Trade Boards being an expensive measure: 'I do not anticipate an annual expenditure of more than five thousand pounds per annum, during the first few years, including salaries of appointed members, allowances to the represented members [workers], travelling investigations, secretarial assistance and a central office, but not the cost of local accommodation. Eventually the cost will depend on the success and extension of the scheme but it is unlikely that the cost will ever rise above ten thousand pounds per annum at the outside.' He inserted a 'tentative and provisional' list of the trades to be included: 'ready-made tailoring; machine-made lace finishing; ready-made blouses; shirt and collar-making; box-making and brush-
making'. When the Act was passed blouse, shirt, collar and brush-making were lost and chain-making was added in their place.

On the 12th March Churchill circulated the latest draft of the Trade Boards Bill to his Cabinet colleagues and asked for their observations. His two-page covering note provides a further dimension to our understanding as to why the Liberal Government felt they should contemplate such an interventionist piece of legislation. Churchill made it clear from the outset that the idea of regulating wages was 'only defensible as exceptional measures to deal with diseased and parasitic trades'. It is surprising that these adjectives should be used to apply to the ready-made tailoring industry which was healthy and whose exports were an important contribution to the country's balance of payments. The industries which were singled out for such treatment were to be awarded a special category status, and were to be viewed as being separate from the rest of economic life: 'A gulf must be fixed between the trades subject to such control and ordinary economic industry. A clear definition of sweated trades must comprise (a) a wage exceptionally low and (b) conditions prejudicial to physical and social welfare.' He also made it clear that this special status served another purpose, as it ensured that minimum wage legislation would only be extended to especially sweated and potentially dangerous and parasitic ones. He tried to appease the supporters of laissez-faire with the assurance that: 'Every further extension of the Act to trades not in the schedule must obtain Parliamentary sanction. Thus there is no danger of such principles being unwittingly accepted as the normal basis of industry.'

To legislate homeworkers out of existence was not, it seemed, the official aim. He anticipated that different time rates would have to
be set for homeworkers and factory and workshop workers: 'To screw up the home wages without a proportionate movement of factory wages might only improve the homeworker into extinction.'

Flexibility, discretion and the guidance of expert officials were crucial to the success of the proposed Bill. Devolution from central government's control and influence was essential to the trade boards. The emphasis was on local expertise: 'By such methods it is hoped that a healthy trade opinion and degree of organisation among employers and work people will be promoted.' Significantly, the home was still regarded as a special and private place. Trade boards could authorise officials' entry of factories and workshops, 'but not of houses except with the workers' consent'. The factory inspectorate's co-operation was essential, he implied, but was not central to the efficient execution of the terms of the proposed Act. The Board of Trade appointees were deemed to be sufficient for the smooth running of the trade boards.

A month before Churchill circulated his plans, The Liverpool Post urged the Government to introduce trade boards quickly. Homeworkers were the focus of its vilification of the sweated labour problem:

Everyone is... in possession of the facts relating to what is known as the sweating system as applied to homeworkers, its starvation wages, the conditions of sweated workers and their families, its indirect effect on fostering crime, drunkenness, disease and almost every known social evil and all are agreed that means must be applied to mitigate as far as possible a danger which threatens to undermine the national prosperity.

The public wanted homeworkers to be protected by wages boards, it insisted.

There is an interesting change in terminology at this time. The build-up to the passing of the Trade Boards Act was characterised in 1907 and 1908 by the use of the term 'wages' boards, and yet when the
Act was passed the term 'trade' was used. Was this change in the use of language significant? It may be that the use of 'wages' was felt to be politically sensitive and damaging. It may be that the use of the term 'trade' was seen to be blander, less specific - this was the first minimum wage legislation. Perhaps the use of the term 'trades' which covered only the allegedly dangerous areas of economic life was held to be more accurate than the broader term 'wages' which could apply to all areas of economic life and not just the most exploited ones. Certainly the debate about the concept of trade boards set its terms within the context of a handful of trades and the minimum hourly rate of pay and away from any definition of, and legislation about, the whole subject of wages. The spectre of defenceless women toiling for long hours, too poor and helpless to form trade unions, was the abiding image which informed the discussions. East End tailors were being mobilised to demonstrate their support for a minimum wage for workers who had a reputation for undercutting wages. At Goulston Street Baths in Aldgate, tailors demanded legislation to establish wages boards 'to prevent the extension of sweating conditions... as early as possible during the forthcoming Parliamentary session'.

During March and April 1909 two similar Bills providing a minimum wage for some sweated industries were debated and were each read for a second time in the House of Commons, the Sweated Industries Bill to establish wage boards on the 26th March and the Trade Boards Bill to establish trade boards on the 18th April. Debate on the former was adjourned and it failed to progress beyond its second reading, it was 'talked out', and the latter became law on the 1st January 1910. Debate on both Bills was intense and at times impassioned. The failure of the Sweated Industries Bill was due to
Churchill's preference for the trade board rather than the wages board scheme. In his covering note to Cabinet colleagues concerning the latest draft of his Bill, dated the 12th March, he urged that it should be read 'a first time before the introduction of a similar measure by Mr Hills' on the 26th inst. Churchill had his way and the Trade Boards Bill was introduced two days ahead of Hills' Bill thereby securing a headstart and, as a Government sponsored Bill, it obviously stood a greater chance of success. Cutting the ground from underneath the promoters of the Sweated Industries Bill, Churchill, introducing the Trade Boards Bill to the House of Commons, described the advantages of his and the Board of Trade's scheme, over the proposed wages boards. His department would not confine itself solely to fixing a minimum rate of pay:

"They will be a centre of information and I hope they will become the foci of organization. As centres of information they may as time goes on be charged with some other aspects of the administration of the work of the trades with the question of the training of the workers, and also they will be able to afford information upon the subject of unemployment."

Whilst their primary purpose was fixing minimum rates of pay in the scheduled trades, the boards would be designed 'to nourish, as far as possible, the interests of the workers, the health and the state of the industry of each particular trade in which they operate'. Great claims were made in the Commons for the merits of this Bill over the Sweated Industries Bill. Its aims and objectives placed the concept of trade boards into an occupational framework, and not into any pay bargaining context. This emphasis may have been used to appease those who deplored the prospect of any state intervention in employer/employee relations in the area of pay and conditions. Trade boards seemed less threatening, less socialistic than wages boards. Churchill reiterated the special nature and circumstances, "the
exceptionally evil conditions' in certain trades, as the justifica-
tion for this proposed state intervention. It seemed most
politicians were reconciled to the Bill. There was little
opposition, save from the Unionist MP for the City of London, Sir
Frederick Banbury, partner in a firm of stockbrokers. He had
been one of the most vocal critics of the Factory and Workshop Act of
1901. The proposed trade boards were, he said, 'a complete surrender
by the Government to the Socialist party'. Playing the employers'
and exporters' card, he was a Free Trader through and through. Many
of his comments were greeted with laughter in the House: 'I do not
consider this a laughing matter. I think the position of this
country is extremely grave.'

Two days later, on March 26th, Mr J.W. Hills, the Unionist MP for
Durham, introduced the Sweated Industries Bill (a Bill which had been
around for nearly ten years) for its second reading. He recognised
the difficulty he faced competing with the Government, and said that
while 'to a large extent, the two Bills cover the same ground... I
think that in certain ways ours is better, but still we have not the
same advantage as private members in pressing it forward that the
Government have'. He explained the similarities and differences
between the two Bills: they were the same as far as the principle of
minimum wages was concerned, but differed in their implementation.
His Bill, he proposed, would start operating immediately, and fix a
minimum wage straight away on an interim basis. The wage levied
would be compulsory and enforced with strong penalties. He said that
the Government's Bill took a much more leisurely approach, and the
time scale was too long: 'It sets up a period of six months during
which the minimum wage to be established will not be enforceable by
law... and it sets up a system of centralising organizations much
more than the Sweated Industries Bill.' He felt that the Government's measure was too permissive and too much under the control of the Board of Trade:

I do not think that the Board of Trade can control the industries of this country in the way that the Government Bill seems to set out. The only way that you can do it is to... allow the employers and the employed to meet together and as far as they can fix a minimum wage... But the enforcing and the fixing ought to come from the wages boards themselves and ought not to be imposed from the top by the Board of Trade. (32)

There were few references to the homeworkers themselves in debates on either of the two Bills. Mr A. Henderson, Labour MP for Barnard's Castle, Northumberland, reminded the House of Commons of the actual homeworkers:

...Who are absolutely helpless to assist themselves; and it is because their inability was so very clearly demonstrated by the great majority of the witnesses that gave evidence last year... that we felt it was essential that the State should come to assist them out of their very serious trouble.

He dismissed criticism that wages boards would raise prices and make manufacturers uncompetitive in foreign markets; and urged the House to treat the matter as a moral issue:

I think that all the sweating exhibitions which have been held in different parts of the country have shown that the prices and wages paid for certain trades which are largely produced by homeworkers are scandalous to our present civilization. (34)

Interestingly, Mr Chiozza Money, the Liberal MP for Paddington North, and a leading National Anti-Sweating League campaigner, revealed that he was prepared to condone the extinction of certain home trades. In the same debate he made this statement which sheds light on the agenda behind his aims and objectives:

I have seen matchboxes made in the East End of London that would make people revolt at the thought of touching them. But that is a trade so far as it is carried out by human fingers, which should cease altogether. It would be good for society, good for widows and good for children, that
they should be driven out of that trade and the work done by machinery and that human fingers should cease to be employed at it at all. (35)

Society and its future were threatened by matchbox-makers.

In the same debate Churchill presented the Government's point of view in general terms:

Nobody seriously minimises the great arguments - the effective and logical arguments - which have been urged in favour of legislation of this kind. There is a strong balance of resolve on the part of the House... that an effort should be made to cope with the evils of sweating. No other view has animated the Government in approaching this question. We have studied it with a single-minded purpose, namely of availing ourselves of all the information and of collecting all the information of those who have studied the question and of formulating the most elastic, flexible and varied machinery for dealing with the evils - or taking all the powers which are likely to be useful; and as we have been animated by that spirit in proposing legislation, so the Board of Trade if Parliament should confer upon it such powers, will be animated by an equal spirit of earnestness and zeal in devising the legislation in such a way as to secure not merely the most striking of pious opinion, but of securing the greatest measure of practical results.

Churchill concluded his speech with some firm advice to the House:

I think... the most convenient course from all points of view and especially from the point of view of the honourable gentlemen (Hills) who moved the second reading of the measure would be when this debate runs its course... we should adjourn the debate. That would leave the Bill... unprejudiced and unprejudged and it would leave it still in the field in case anything should happen to the Government Bill... and I hope we may all work together without party distinction on the matter when there is a chance of doing something useful. (36)

No more was heard of the Sweated Industries Bill that session, it had been 'talked out'. (37)

On April 28th the Trade Boards Bill, introduced by Mr H.J. Tennant, (38) was read a second time. It was nineteen years to the day since the House of Lords Report on the Sweating System was published. (39) He portrayed the problem of sweated labour and the
proposed remedies in the customary lurid terms, now peppered with medical terminology:

The application of this measure is very limited. It is intended to be applied exclusively to exceptionally unhealthy patches of the body politic where the development has been arrested in spite of the growth of the rest of the organism. It is to the morbid and diseased places - to the industrial diphtheritic spots that we should apply the antitoxin of trade boards.

Sweated homework was morally corrupt and redundant:

The trade becomes a parasitic trade, feeding upon other industries and trades in the country and on the wealth of the nation for in such a case the wages bill of the sweated industry is largely paid by the relatives with whom the worker lives, by the poor law and by the community who subscribe to hospitals and asylums, by charity and by a proportion of the cost of old age pensions. [recently introduced]

This Bill had, he said, the virtue of helping the State identify the inefficient and the unemployable and the nation would thus be better able to:

deal with these sweated workers... If the girl is sweated rather than go to the poor law she drags others down with her into this industrial abyss. It is to combat these evils that we are introducing this Bill.

He acknowledged its pioneering and risky qualities:

It is at once an experiment and a revolution - a new step in the social progress... This is the first occasion, certainly in modern Parliamentary times, in which any Government has proposed machinery first for deciding and secondly, for enforcing a legal rate of wages. ('40)

Few who spoke on the Bill, whether for or against, spoke for the homeworkers themselves and how they viewed the prospect of the legislation under discussion, which was ostensibly to help them. Fears of the long-term damage to Motherhood, the Race and the Empire; the pricing-out of English-made goods in competition with cheaper foreign goods; the resulting flood of the English market with cheaper
imports; and criticism of how the trade boards would actually function on a day-to-day basis, dominated the discussions. It was Sir William Bull, the Unionist MP for Hammersmith, who had been a member of the House of Commons Select Committee on Homework during 1907 - 1908, who reminded those present of some unrepresented views: 'There are a great many persons who strongly object to legislation on the subject.' He recalled the fears of the homeworkers who had given evidence to the Committee, who said that they preferred homework to factory work, and that if it was regulated further they ran the risk of losing their only means of earning a living. Mr Parkes, the Liberal Unionist MP for Birmingham, and also a member of the Homework Select Committee, was concerned that the biggest losers would be homeworkers and rate-payers:

I believe the loss of it [homework] will bring an amount of distress upon the country and increase the cost of the poor law in a way which will prove astonishing.

While he agreed with the principle of a minimum wage, many of the Bill's provisions were said to be problematic.

Churchill reminded the Commons why they were proposing to act on this problem at this particular time. The Daily News' Sweated Industries Exhibition and subsequent sweating exhibitions had 'created the driving power which has very largely rendered this Bill possible'. This is an important point, conceding the value and success of the National Anti-Sweating League's campaign which had stimulated the Government to act. It was a considerable compliment to the League's members. Churchill continued with his familiar line that homeworkers were 'a serious national evil', it was an imperial problem that 'any class of his Majesty's subjects should receive less than a living wage in return for their utmost exertions'. The laws of supply and demand had not regulated or eliminated the problem of
sweated labour, and in fact had exacerbated the situation. Women homeworkers were in the worst position in the labour market, and so special, peculiar and vulnerable were they as a workforce, that they deserved an innovatory piece of minimum wage legislation. For them and their special circumstances this new law was being contemplated:

Where you have what we have called the sweated trades, you have no organisation, no parity of bargaining, the good employer is undercut by the worst; the worker whose livelihood depends upon the industry is undersold by the worker who only takes the work as a second string, his feebleness and ignorance generally renders the worker an easy prey to the tyranny of the masters and the middlemen, only a step higher up the ladder than the worker... where those conditions prevail you have not a condition of progress but a condition of progressive degeneration.

The language used to describe the issue of homework in this and all previous discussions is significant. In this particular debate homeworkers were described in medical terms. They were sick, feeble, diseased and thereby dangerous, reiterated Churchill:

The widow, the women-folk of the poorer class, the labourer, the broken, the weak, the struggling... I ask this House to regard these industries as sick and diseased and to treat them as if they were diseases... It would be cruel to prescribe the same treatment for the sick as the sound... We must not regard these trades as if they were inanimate abstractions. They are living... almost sentient organisms and each trade will require to be studied separately... there is no regulation dose with which you can treat the disease. You do not make the cure quicker by making the dose stronger. Different medicines, different diets, different operations are required in each case and each case will need personal effort, personal engagement and devotion from the proper individuals, if you are really to make that effective inroad on the evil which is desired. That is the justification for the great flexibility of procedure and wide discretionary powers which the Board of Trade are asking in this Bill. 

The final points of his speech made it clear how he and other senior Liberal politicians perceived this measure. If successful it would be a legal landmark:

In passing this Bill the House will not only be dealing manfully with a great social evil, but will also take another step upon that path of social organisation on which
we have boldly entered, and along which the Parliaments of this generation of whatever complexion, willingly or unwillingly, will have to march. (46)

The Bill was read for the second time, and then sent to a Standing Committee, thereby guaranteeing its successful passage onto the statute book that session. (47) Churchill wrote to his wife on the night of April 28th 1909: 'I write this line from the Bench. The Trade Boards Bill has been beautifully received and will be passed without division. Arthur Balfour and Alfred Lyttelton were most friendly to it, and all opposition has faded away. But the House was tired and jaded and speaking to them was hard work.' (48) Since 1908 it had become increasingly apparent to his contemporaries that Churchill had nailed his colours to the mast of social reform.

Beatrice Webb, née Potter, noted in her diary: 'He [Churchill] is brilliantly able - more than a phrase-monger, I think, and is definitely casting in his lot with the cause of constructive state action.' (49)

The Standing Committee discussed and amended the Trade Boards Bill during May and June, ready for its third reading in July. During this time it had been re-worked into a form which was then closely debated and amended in the House and passed its third and final reading on the 16th July. The last reading allowed all the members to discuss the wording of the Bill, and question Churchill further as to its scope and implementation. (50)

On the 19th July the Trade Boards Bill was taken from the House of Commons and read in the House of Lords for the first time. It was read a second time on the 30th August. Lord Hamilton of Dalziel, a Liberal, spoke in favour of the Bill, acknowledging that the problems of sweated labour were now known to everyone and were an important feature of recent political activity:
I do not suppose that during the last twenty years there is a feature of our social system which has been so much inquired into, so much spoken about and so much written about... the Government is of the opinion that the time has now come when the only practical remedy shall be applied.

He reminded their Lordships that legislation on sweated labour was imminent in Germany, their foremost economic and naval rivals. (Germany was often held in comparison in discussions on the state of the nation during the Edwardian period). His speech conveys a sense of rivalry with Germany and an urgency to be seen to be acting at least as quickly on the problem. Legislation was needed: 'Not only in the interests of the poor helpless people themselves, but also in the interests of the community.'

The Marquess of Salisbury, a Conservative, did not feel that the Bill went far enough to represent homeworkers and improve their conditions. Their situation, 'the evil', was so grave that they should not be treated on the same footing as factory workers in the same trades. He painted a picture of the deplorable misery of many homeworkers' lives, and warned of the long-term consequences to the nation's motherhood. The outlook was unimaginable:

These conditions of employment are so barbarous in their effects on homes, on women's lives and especially on child life. The worst of it is that when you look into this matter you find that there are really depths below depths.

The Earl of Lytton, a Conservative, and a Vice-President of the National Anti-Sweating League, assured his peers that the Bill was 'neither vicious in principle nor revolutionary in practice'.

After its second reading, it was sent to a committee of the whole House whose members debated and amended it further on September 13th and 16th. It was read a third time and the final amendments were agreed on September 20th, whereupon it was returned to the House of
Commons, who in turn considered and agreed their Lordships amendments on October 7th. The Trade Boards Bill received the Royal Assent on October 20th. For the first time workers in the ready-made wholesale tailoring, cardboard box-making, chain-making and machine-made lace- and net-making were the beneficiaries of statutory minimum wage legislation.

In sum, it had been a straightforward debate. At its second reading (28th April) only three MPs had opposed it and fifteen supported it. Some of the speakers had been involved in the anti-sweating campaign for a decade and gave the debate an authoritative air. The participants gave the subject a thorough hearing, indicating that they thought the Bill broke new ground. There was a sense too that the public had been kept informed by the campaigners and the Press, and that the public was behind the Bill. Harry Marks, (Conservative MP for the Isle of Thanet, previously MP for St George's in the East End from 1896 - 1900) indicated the cross-party and public support: 'I think it may be taken as agreed that there is a general desire in all sections of the House and among all classes of the public that some effective steps should be taken to put down sweating.'

There was the predictable posturing from the scare-mongers such as Sir Frederick Banbury, but that was hardly taken seriously. Given the radical nature of the Bill, the first piece of minimum wage legislation, it was a surprisingly non-partisan debate which attracted cross-party concern and support. The Trade Boards Bill fits into the Liberals' social reform programme. Already on the statute book were: The Trades Disputes Act (1906); Education (Provision of School Meals) Act (1906); Workmen's Compensation (Extension) Act (1906); Notification of Births Act (1907); Education
(Administrative Provisions/School Medical Inspections) Act (1907); Probation Act (1907); Matrimonial Causes Act (1907); Children's Act (1908) and the Old Age Pensions Act (1908). Given this background the Trade Boards Bill had an easy passage through the House of Commons and an even easier journey through the Lords.

FLEET STREET AND HANBURY STREET: THE ROLE OF THE PRESS

National and provincial newspapers followed the Parliamentary proceedings with assiduity and generally gave the idea their support. The Gertrude Tuckwell Collection of newspaper cuttings at The Trade Union Congress Library, London, conveys a strong impression of extensive interest in the parliamentary discussions on the two bills. There are clippings from the foreign press - Montreal's Daily Star: 'Sweated Workers in London and Their Awful Plight'. The British national newspapers, with The Daily News giving the debate the most column inches, The Times, The Daily Chronicle and The Morning Post covered the subject. The provincial Press, especially in cities where sweating and homework were well-known, kept their readers informed on the Parliamentary events: The Glasgow News; The Leicester Post; The Birmingham Evening Dispatch; The Liverpool Courier and The Bristol Evening News. Other magazines and specialist journals followed suit: The Christian Globe; Tit Bits; The Lancet; Outlook; The Draper and Cooperative News. The level of Press support for the minimum wage idea must have given politicians the sense that they had chosen wisely in acting on this matter. Greater Press awareness of social questions after the 1890s testify to the growing importance of the subject in parliament. The combination of the Liberals' wish to implement some measures of social welfare and social reform,
and support from Fleet Street to clean up homeworkers' homes in places like Hanbury Street in Spitalfields made for a powerful political alliance. The specialised Press, notably The Lancet, had first raised their readers' awareness of homework nearly twenty-five years before this legislation.

The interplay between the Parliamentary debate and Press coverage of the subject reflected the large measure of consensus which had developed surrounding the Bill. It was a human interest story which had implications for the future of the country and the Empire. Editors and journalists did not hesitate to 'talk up' this subject and kept the public well informed throughout 1909. Even Conservative newspapers, which could be expected to oppose a piece of legislation which interfered in the relation between employers and employees, capital and labour, chided the Government for not acting more quickly in this which they regarded as an exceptional case. Since 1906 the Conservative Morning Post had employed William Beveridge to write on social questions (he joined the Board of Trade in 1908) and his views reflected politicians' and civil servants' views on sweated labour, which was perceived to be dangerous because: sweated trades were parasitic and damaged other trades; they damaged the health and future prosperity of the country, and employed cheap female and child labour. Even The Times, which opposed the adoption of a minimum wage, cautiously welcomed the attempt to deal with what it regarded as the special circumstances of homework and sweated labour. The debate on the Bill was characterised by the absence of party politics. Opposition was slight and centred on a fear of increased foreign competition if the country's wage bill was increased because of minimum wages. Few newspapers devoted many inches to this fear, and it was left to The Birmingham Evening Dispatch to
articulate the Tariff Reformers' hostile view of the Free Traders' influence on the Homework Committee and the new Bill, (68) who would not, or dare not 'face the logical issue of the situation. And so we found it [the Committee] calmly declaring that these trades which cannot fight against the foreign competition of sweated goods had better be abandoned. That is the typical attitude of the Free Trader who, while he refuses to sacrifice his principles, is quite resigned to the sacrifice of some other person's means of livelihood.' (69)

The Trade Boards Act combined elements of the two Bills debated that session. The Sweated Industries Bill had been re-modelled and strengthened and given a less controversial title. Conciliation, not antagonism, was said to be at the core of the new measure. Hopes were raised for homeworkers' futures: 'It is a courageous attempt to rehabilitate the submerged section of our industrial population. It may be termed epoch making.' (70)

THE NATIONAL ANTI-SWEATING LEAGUE AND THE 1909 ACT

Members of the National Anti-Sweating League could claim much of the credit for the first minimum wage legislation. Since 1906 they had campaigned for a minimum for the most sweated workers in the labour force. Within three years, they had helped raise the public's and politicians' awareness on issues surrounding sweated homework and had successfully gained support for the radical idea of a legal minimum wage. The driving forces behind the League's activities were its most senior members, men like Sir Charles Dilke, Leo Chiozza Money, George Cadbury; and women like Mary MacArthur, Gertrude Tuckwell, Clementina Black and the Webbs. The high calibre of their two
committees ensured them access to influence. George Bernard Shaw's and H.G. Wells's support counted for a great deal. (See Appendix N)

The League acknowledged the help they had received from the Press and continued to use them to prosecute the cause. The Times and other national dailies included appeals for money to inform the three to four hundred thousand workers affected by the new Act: 'Many of whom are miserably poor and dispirited women and girls.' Their helplessness had necessitated the Act which only provided the framework for a better wage. The money would pay for meetings 'throughout the country for the instruction of these workers and for the formation among them of organizations more or less perfect, that will hold them together in support of the awards made by the boards'. (71) Their secretary J.J. Mallon, (72) and other members of the executive committee, gave lectures and addressed meetings around the country, often under the auspices of local Fabian societies. Exhibitions were still an important strategy, held that summer at Earl's Court, The Crystal Palace and Ilford. (73)

Their third annual report sheds light on the two Bills of 1909. The League supported both Bills, wages boards or trade boards, for the essence of both measures was a legal minimum wage for certain of the lowest paid workers. They wisely took the view that having two Bills debated in the House of Commons gave a better chance of success. Having seen the text of the Trade Boards Bill, whose inspection and enforcement procedures did not altogether please them, they persuaded their friends in Parliament, Mr Hills and Sir Charles Dilke, to introduce the Sweated Industries Bill as a Private Member's Bill. In the course of the debate, Hills and Dilke became confident that the Government 'would entertain certain proposals for the amendment of the unsatisfactory clauses in their own Bill' and
decided not to press on with it. Thus the appearance of these two measures had, it seemed, ensured a greater chance of success. The League had no complaints about Churchill:

It is pleasing to state that this optimism was entirely justified. Mr Churchill... has been throughout exceedingly open to suggestions for the improvement of his measure as well as deft in incorporating those for which he considered a case had been made out. <sup>74</sup>

At the time when the parliamentary debate was at its height, Spitalfields held a Flower and Baby Show. Throughout the East End of London that summer several events were held which illustrate the national preoccupation with the British Empire, its mothers and its children. Empire day on the 29th May was celebrated in all elementary schools. East London rang with the sounds of the Empire Hymn; The National Anthem; Union Jack Dances; Empire Cycle Dances; sea fairies and boy scouts from one school pretended to explore a strange country when their camp came under attack. Spitalfields demonstrated for the Empire that day.<sup>75</sup>

The Spitalfields Flower and Baby Show reported good results for plant and human life. Of the six hundred seedlings sent out for cultivation, two hundred and ninety were returned for the competition: 'Excellent effect is being made upon the people of the neighbourhood in teaching them a knowledge and a love of plant life.' The metaphor of the seedlings is intriguing for the discussion of local homeworkers, dirty homes and neglected children. Dr Cursham Corner who judged the baby competition was pleased to note 'a decided improvement in the babies and the state in which they were brought to the show'. One infant whom he described as 'elephantine' was thirteen months old and weighed thirty-five pounds. A special prize was given to the mother.<sup>76</sup>
The George Yard Mission's Mother's Meetings organised two 'pleasant excursions' to the Sussex Downs. Four hundred Spitalfields and Whitechapel women took part in the August outing. Special trains were hired and paid for by 'a private gentleman' (Colonel Hayne). Once there they were entertained by a band playing selections of music and "the women were well-provided for during the day". Organisations at local and national level mobilised to support working-class mothers.

THE ORGANISATION OF WOMEN AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY

During 1909 the Women's Trade Union League, the National Federation of Women Workers and the Women's Industrial Council continued to canvass their views on homework and the proposed Trade Boards Bill. It was a year of 'strenuous and successful work' said the League, who moved their headquarters into the same building as the National Anti-Sweating League at 34 Mecklenburgh Square. They were pleased with the success of the Trade Boards Bill and thanked Mr A. Henderson, MP, and the Labour Party for 'the constant care and attention by which the Bill has been carried to a successful issue'. The new Act would give renewed impetus to increased industrial organisation in the four scheduled trades, they predicted. Their branches in Hoxton and Whitechapel were preparing to help local women in the cardboard box-making and ready-made wholesale tailoring industries, who would be the first to benefit from the new Act.

The National Federation of Women Workers' weekly paper The Woman Worker, edited by Mary MacArthur, maintained its concern about working mothers. The 1908 articles, 'Baby's Heritage', 'A Slum Mother' and 'What the Race Might Be', were followed up in 1909 with
several essays which focused attention on homeworking mothers.\(^7\)

Given the available information on homeworkers' lifestyles, and the massive publicity about them in recent years, it is disappointing to read 'Sound Advice to Homeworkers' in *The Woman Worker*. A 'highly respected correspondent' begged 'most earnestly' that the paper give some sound advice to the homeworkers who were at the heart of the new Trade Boards Act. They were criticised for being more slack and less reliable and less punctual than women who went out to work:

> Again and again I have tried to give a homeworker a good turn, but I feel almost disinclined to try any more as my experience has been so unsatisfactory... How can one help such people? \(^\text{80}\)

The Third Annual Report of the N.F.W.W. was presented to the delegates at the Memorial Hall in Farringdon Road on the 20th November 1909. Mary MacArthur's Presidential address reported 'exceedingly satisfactory progress' despite the recent severe trade depression. Membership stood at four thousand, and almost thirty branches. The Federation had dealt 'firmly and tactfully with the disputes that have arisen' and had been able to 'secure concessions and reforms for many members'. In her opinion the new Act was a landmark in industrial relations: 'a revolution in industrial legislation', and the federation intended seeing that it was extended to other low-paid trades. It was something they had been working for since 1906, and was of 'unparalleled importance' in the battle against homework and sweated labour. While their Whitechapel branch was doing well, she was sad to report that Hoxton had collapsed: 'most of the members have lapsed owing to a local difficulty'. \(^\text{81}\)

The Women's Industrial Council continued to produce propaganda both for and against minimum wage legislation.\(^\text{82}\) Mrs Carl Meyer and Miss Clementina Black's book *Makers of Our Clothes* put the case
in favour of trade boards. It was the result of their year-long investigation into women's work in the London tailoring, dressmaking and underclothing trades. Based on approximately a thousand case studies and visits to the women's homes, 'its collection of facts... should be invaluable to politicians and to a large number of persons whose conscience is disturbed by the problems of poverty and underpayment.' 

By 1909 the Women's Industrial Council's canon of writings on homework and sweated labour was considerable. Clementina Black's book *Married Women's Work*, not published until 1915, explored the popular concern with the effects of married women's work on their homes and their children in various parts of the country.

During the Edwardian years various women's organisations were at the forefront of the anti-sweating campaign which aroused and maintained public and political interest in minimum wage legislation for the lowest paid workers. The Women's Trade Union League, the Women's Industrial Council and then the National Federation of Women Workers played a key role in ensuring politicians were informed on the urgency of the matter. While working-class women took part in the investigation of homework and sweated labour, it was middle- and upper-class women who organised the sweating exhibitions, founded the National Anti-Sweating League, and arranged the Guildhall Conference of 1906 where the trade boards scheme was presented. Crucial in this process were the contacts in high places that the Women's Trade Union League and the Women's Industrial Council had. Both organizations had members whose husbands sat in Parliament and indeed were members of the Government. The Dilke-Tuckwell group illustrates this relationship and the power of networks created by ties of blood and marriage in nineteenth and early twentieth century politics. Lady Emilia Dilke, President of the W.T.U.L. was the wife of Sir Charles...
Dilke, MP, who first introduced the W.T.U.L.'s minimum wage proposal in the House of Commons. Her niece Gertrude Tuckwell, who succeeded her in 1905, founded the National Anti-Sweating League; her one-time secretary and W.T.U.L. organizer May Abraham was married to H.J. Tennant, MP, responsible for guiding the Trade Boards Bill through the House. May Tennant pressured her brother-in-law, the Prime Minister, H.H. Asquith, to introduce the bill as a government measure. Other influential friends included the Cadburys, the Webbs, H.G. Wells, G.B. Shaw and R.H. Tawney. Such close contacts with politicos and the literati was acknowledged by other politicians and newspaper editors. This network which revolved around the Women's Industrial Council, the women's trade union movement and the National Anti-Sweating League, took every opportunity to influence and nurture the parliamentary debate on women's homework.

THE TRADE BOARDS ACT AND HOMEWORKERS

Homeworkers in Spitalfields did not enjoy immediate financial benefits from the new Act - those employed in the cardboard box-making and ready-made wholesale tailoring had to wait for their improved hourly rates of pay. The long delay was inherent in the nature of these two trades and the circumstances of the women who did this work. Going from a position of no regulation of wages to the scenario which followed the passing of the Act was bound to take time to set up and implement. Further, it was difficult to differentiate the employers from the employees, as so many homeworkers also sub-contracted work out. The Tailoring Trade Board, covering the majority of workers to enjoy the protection of the Act, proved the
most difficult to establish and enforce. Important sections of the clothing industry like shirt-making, mantle-making and dress-making were not covered by the 1909 Act. (Shirt-making would be added to the schedule in 1913).

The question is whether homeworkers in Spitalfields benefited from the 1909 legislation. Did their earnings rise? This was the premise at the heart of the Act, and so if earnings did not rise then it surely failed its fundamental principle. If homeworkers actually received the new rates then they would have benefited as the rates were higher than those earned by most homeworkers. In fact the new rates of pay set by the boards proved to be less beneficial to homeworkers than to factory and workshop workers covered by the Trade Boards Act in the four scheduled trades. In the East End of London only twenty-four per cent of the homeworkers Tawney studied in 1915 reported an increase in wages as a result of the Trade Boards.

The MacDonalds' opposition to wages or trade boards was vindicated when it was seen that minimum hourly rates could keep pay at a low level for certain types of worker. For example, some machinists earned more than the minimum rates they were to receive under the trade boards. Also, the statutory rates often failed to take into account that different classes of worker incurred different expenses in doing their job. More common was the homeworkers' lack of confidence in challenging their employers and insisting on the legal minimum, or ignorance of their rights to dispute the rates which were paid and to inform the local inspectorate of the situation. While the Trade Boards Act was aimed at the least skilled and weakest workers, by no means all homeworkers received the new rates. Tawney found that the tailoring trade board set only minimum time-rates and left it to employers to fix piece-rates, the wage level set for men
was six pence an hour, and for women three pence-three farthings an hour. By 1914 only a small number of homeworkers' earnings had improved. Tawney estimated that the total number of homeworkers employed in those sections of the tailoring industry affected by the trade board was between fifteen and twenty-two thousand, and that out of four hundred and twenty-five homeworkers in the East End of London only about half were earning the minimum time rate, the rest were earning less.

Some homeworkers undoubtedly lost their supplies of work as a result of the new legislation. Higher wages and improved production put homeworkers at a distinct disadvantage and there was a gradual decline in homework. Although not suffering from increased foreign competition as feared, many employers found it too complicated to fix minimum piece-rates for homeworkers, and some fixed their rates high in order to avoid confrontations with the inspectors. Often the older and slower homeworkers were weeded out. Some had their work reduced, and other employers refused to take on new homeworkers because of the higher rates they were now obliged to pay. The Act was an incentive to re-organise their production and move it into the factory or workshop. Evasions were commonplace as homeworkers, desperate for work, conspired with unscrupulous employers to turn a blind eye to the new minimum rates of pay. Schmiechen concludes that the Trade Boards accomplished what many had originally campaigned for, the abolition of homework by its gradual elimination.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS: THE BATTLE FOR 'PIN MONEY'

The scant and secondhand accounts of homework in the East End of London help to humanise the sources quoted earlier. They are the closest we come to meeting the subjects of the debate.

Will Crooks, London's first Labour Mayor of Poplar in 1901, a London County Council member from 1892 and the Labour MP for Woolwich in 1903, remembered his mother doing homework:

Those were very lean years [the 1860s-1880s] and I don't know what we should have done but for mother. She used to toil with the needle far into the night and often all night long... many a time as a lad I have helped mother carry the clothes she made to Houndsditch. There were no trams running then and the 'bus fare from Poplar to Aldgate was four pence, a sum we never dared think of spending on a ride... I can picture her now as I used to see her when I awoke in the night, making oilskin coats by candle in our single room.

Edith Evans, born in the East End in 1908, collected and delivered the shirts her mother made:

From time to time we would be sent to the 'Shirt Shop' with an empty push-chair. Mother would stand at the gate until we returned. If she saw us coming in sight with a laden push-chair she would rush indoors, lift the cover from the machine... in eager anticipation of the few precious shillings she would be able to earn.

Arthur Harding's mother made sacks; and matchboxes for Bryant and May's factory in Bow, in their Bethnal Green tenement:

Every day she made eight gross (1,152) at two pence half penny a gross, one shilling and six pence a day. She was fagged out when she made her eight gross, poor old dear...
the room was very small, twelve foot by ten foot, and it was the only room we had. There was an old kitchen table, Mother used that for working most of the time... the floor being the drying ground for the matchboxes. There was no room to move about... the matchboxes had to be spread out to dry and you couldn't afford to tread on them.

And on his return from school: 'Directly I got in she would say, 'Get out'... and sometimes she would chuck me something to eat.'

Ted Harrison, born in Hoxton in 1902, helped his family make artificial flowers:

There would be me mother, me brother and me, and me mother used to tell us gory stories about murders or sing us songs to keep us interested. Mind you we had to bleeding work! We had oil lamps, and beer bottles filled with water which we put in front of the lamps to throw the light. We'd work till nine at night, but my mother'd work till twelve especially if she needed the money.

These four extracts exhibit homework as a central part of life in some poor families and attest to its normalcy as an economic activity. Here homework is integrated into family life, and obvious pleasure was derived from mothers and children working together, albeit for a tiny reward. There is a sense of this work, and the intimacy it fostered, binding the families who engaged in it. These vignettes feature hardworking mothers and their children exercising some measure of economic freedom. Homework enabled families to stay together when an alternative was destitution and the workhouse - which was the greatest threat to family life. These accounts present dignity and close relationships enjoyed by mothers struggling to support their children. The solidarity and joy of these arrangements is absent in all the other sources cited in this study. These statements capture another dimension of homework which does not appear in the evidence presented to Royal Commissions and Select Committees of the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

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Nowhere else are the positive arguments for homework and family life evinced so clearly and so honestly.

HOMEWORKERS: AN ABSENT PRESENCE IN FEMINIST HISTORY

The homework debate did not take place in a political or social vacuum. Those who commented on homework, and who sought to legislate it out of existence, were part of the same political and social circle who discussed and debated many other areas of working-class women's living and working lives. Nineteenth century ideas about the role of women and women's trade unionism were also inextricably interlinked. Unfortunately for the women who did homework, their work elicited powerful and hostile epithets and heated discussions based on a prevailing domestic ideology. In particular, the 'home' in the course of this debate became imbued with an almost religious significance. Popular opinion - as manifested in the press and elsewhere - was not prepared to readily accept the concept of wage-earning women, and even less were they ready to tolerate women 'polluting' their own domestic spaces by engaging in economic activities which, apparently, had such a marginal impact on their family income, merely 'pin money'. As we have seen from first-hand accounts at the beginning of the chapter, homework was not necessarily 'polluting'. The thesis has demonstrated that this notion is deeply suspect, laden as it was with middle-class Victorian views about the home. We have also seen in this thesis that homework was by no means a marginal economic activity. The women who did it had to work for essentials, and the action of homework as a way of earning 'pin money' for non essentials which is implied in this term, is not sustained by the evidence which has been presented.
Furthermore, Spitalfields homeworkers felt the same weight of political and moral condemnation ranged against them as had women who worked underground in mines and in factories in earlier decades. In the case of the latter, the arguments ranged against them were different to those deployed against homeworkers: they were abandoning their homes and neglecting their domestic duties; they faced moral dangers by working alongside men and they were 'unsexing' themselves by working in places which were defined as 'male'. However, the arguments cited against homeworkers were different: their crime was not so much to expose themselves to moral risk, but to have polluted the inner sanctum of the home and the family. The moral condemnation about homeworkers was therefore far more extensive and invasive a form of criticism. The women involved had, apparently, prostituted their homes for things which were not essential or necessary, and in so doing put their children, and the nation at risk.

In this thesis we have explored the development of homework as a political problem by focusing on five key themes and issues. Firstly, the Victorian and Edwardian debate on the presence of women in the workforce and the arguments as to whether women workers should, or should not, be the subjects of protective labour legislation. Secondly, related to this theme of the role of women, is the definition of the home in terms of public and private spheres which was imposed on working women. Thirdly, the hidden, covert nature of homework and the methodological implications, with regard to the lack of reliable data. Fourthly, the issue of Jewish homeworking women as not featuring in the campaign to legislate on homework and the typicality and atypicality of Spitalfields as a community where this type of work was done. Finally, the way in
which a reform campaign defined and politicised the problem, culminating in the first minimum wage legislation.

In analysing homework within the framework of these issues and themes this study has endeavoured to add to the existing literature on women and work by shedding light on an area of women's economic activities which has been ignored or passed over by contemporary feminist and labour historians. It has also sought to illuminate a somewhat neglected dimension of the history and politics of East London with its unique mix of peoples, cultures and beliefs. Finally, this study has argued that homework had provided an important role in industrial manufacture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The fact that it was a subject which was badly served by reliable or accurate data, had important consequences for its politics and subsequent history.

To begin with, the campaign against homework brought many tensions and contradictions about the employment, work and role of women and the role of the family in industrial society which have not been adequately addressed by many historians of the period. Our examination of homework has exposed the way in which women were doubly circumscribed in what they could do in the formal industrial environment, and circumscribed in what they could do in their own homes. The homework controversy exposed the dilemmas associated with what work was supposed to be, and whether women should actually be doing it.

The impact of industrialisation on women's work and workplace has, this thesis would contend, been narrowly defined by existing literature. It has been largely interpreted to mean work in factories. But many factories existed on a sophisticated system of homework and an army of homeworkers were needed. (See Appendices C, I
and K). Their contribution to the economy cannot be easily calculated, however, it is safe to say that it was substantial. Inevitably, without the necessary data, we cannot see how much homework was actually being done and its economic impact. The only evidence we have is the evidence to Royal Commissions and Select Committees, much of which is anecdotal and can only serve to give impressionistic views. It hardly conveys the impression of the enormous amount of economic activity throughout the East End and the City of London. Homework was a way of life which saw industrialisation impinge on the home and the family. Women and children were involved in economic production, but not in a political relation to it. Homeworkers were not politicised and unionised as were women workers in the textile mills of the North of England, but they were industrialised and in a sense were an integral part of the system of production of so many goods. For large numbers of people homework was a vital part of the domestic economy. Homeworkers offered a cost-effective form of production which suited employers: they were a reservoir of cheap, compliant and non-unionised labour and bore some of the costs of production themselves by providing their own workspace, heat and light, and sometimes the materials with which to do the work. Their work was in a wide range of industries, from clothing to boot and shoe-making to box-making. Many homeworkers were versatile, they could turn their hands to a range of homework. Factory workers, on the other hand, were limited to one or two stages of production. Their hours were regulated by law, they could be unionised and therefore strike for higher wages, and they were more expensive, they had to be accommodated, warmed and lit. Homeworking women were an element in the financial and production equations of many different employers. Homeworkers were employed by large and
small firms alike in the period studied in the thesis on a scale whose economic significance we can only guess. But that they made a contribution which merits being considered as a central aspect of industrialisation, we can be in no doubt.

In the light of the significance of homework to nineteenth century industrialisation it is puzzling that so many commentators have tended to underestimate homeworking and homeworkers in their analysis of the development of industrial society. Homeworkers' absence from any official statistics has possibly ensured - more than any other factor - that they have not been located in the context of the industrialisation of women's work. Jane Lewis's work, for example, yields few references to homeworkers, although her work on the careers of Helen Bosanquet and Beatrice Webb describe their attitudes to the home, and to sweated labour.\(^6\) Robert Gray's recent study (1993) of the northern textile factories of the 1830s to the 1860s is concerned with gender and factory reform, but he does not discuss whether homework had any place in the economics of production in the northern mills.\(^7\) Articles by Rosemary Feurer (1988), Ellen Jordan (1989) on the issues surrounding protective labour legislation for women have barely mentioned women who worked in their own homes. Jane Lewis and Celia Davies's 1991 study of a century of gender-based protective legislation referred to the place of homeworkers in the campaign to abolish sweated labour. With the exception of Sonya Rose's 1992 *Limited Livelihoods*, sadly, much of this debate is absent from recent studies even though Victorian and Edwardian debates on the home, women's position in the workplace, their role in the family and wider society, were mindful of homeworking women.\(^8\)
This study has also explored Victorian domestic ideology and how it came to be deployed as vital ammunition in the war waged against homework. Not only were Spitalfields women working, they were accused of defiling their homes by taking in homework. Homeworkers did not welcome attention for several reasons. Invasion of privacy, resentment at the likely results of investigation and the reluctance of middle-class commentators who, while disapproving of homework, were uneasy about sanctioning the invasion of homes by officials. Spitalfield's Jewish community was able to resist unwelcome attention by deciding not to acknowledge homework as being a part of their life. It was simply not an issue.

The economic imperative, and the desire to avoid unwanted scrutiny, meant that unlike their Christian counterparts, Jewish homeworking women were not subject to the same barrage of criticism and attempts at control. Conservative and radical members of the Jewish community chose, for different reasons, to downplay their women's involvement in this type of economic activity. This thesis has revealed something about the dynamics of social and political 'problems'. In the case of homeworking, it was Christian reformers who defined it as a problem, the Jewish community, on the other hand, refused to do so.

This thesis has focused on a dimension of industrialisation which has not had the benefit of relatively reliable data such as exists for factory workers. Contemporaries were aware of the importance of the factory system, but the relevance, importance and scale of homework was not widely understood. Women, who were the great majority of the homeworking workforce, were, therefore a hidden army
of workers who toiled, unseen and largely unknown and unheard, and yet were a vital element in the industrialised economy with their non-industrialised, non-factory based employment. While recent feminist and labour historians have studied the factory system and the location of women's employment there, homework has been overlooked. This study looks at some of the reasons why, not least of which has been the lack of reliable data and sources, a problem acknowledged by the campaigners of the day. In contrast, students of women's factory-based employment have been well served by sources. Once their labour was legislated, a report-writing bureaucracy and inspectorate provided data and detailed written snapshots about this type of workplace. There is not comparable and reliable evidence and data on homeworkers.

This study has shown that women workers who chose to work in the home were in fact industrialised far earlier than any studies suggest. Even though women homeworkers worked in their own pre-industrial workspaces, they were just as much part of Britain's industrialisation as were factory and workshop-based workers. This type of industrialisation penetrated the home in a form which altered the way in which the home was seen, and disturbed and affronted reformers who saw it as putting the nation's children - the great resource of the Empire - at risk. Moreover, it was a kind of industrialisation which could not be checked or investigated. Homework was only defined as a political problem when the public health implications were discovered. There was an awareness that while industrialisation in factories involved issues of health and safety, it was acceptable because they could be inspected. What was understood from the outset was that the home could never be inspected for logistical, economic and cultural reasons, hence the desire to
abolish homework outright. The multitude of allegations about the dirt and squalor of homeworkers' homes were another reason for the Jewish community to ignore the existence of homework. Jews were criticised on many fronts throughout the 1880s, and were therefore reluctant to expose themselves further. Their solution was to refuse to consider it a problem in the way that reformers saw it.

VILIFICATION TO LEGISLATION: THE CHANGING DEBATE ON HOMEWORK

This study has demonstrated the way women's homework was politicised by a slow-burning and long-running campaign; the changing policies of the debate and its changing definition, and place on the political agenda. First to be considered was the definition of what the problem was, and the various shifts of definition. The case was used as an example of the worst excesses of the labour market by pointing out the public health risks it posed to the purchasers of the goods they produced. Then, from the 1890s on, the danger that homework was alleged to pose by undermining the worker's health, and that of her offspring, was used to sustain the campaign. The last phase of the homework debate, from 1906 onwards, was characterised by concern about the perceived effect of starvation wages on the labour market and the economy. When added to the powerful cocktail of Motherhood, Race and Empire, all the necessary ingredients were in place for the successful campaign for the first minimum wage law.

Each shift in definition and policy by the campaigning individuals and groups was informed by four major factors: the increasing role of information in the area of social policy; the activities of pressure groups and key personalities; the role of the Press, in particular,
The Lancet and The Daily News; and the predominance of the 'National Interest', especially in the post-Boer War period. Firstly, consider the role of information. In 1884, the earliest concerns about homework were expressed by The Lancet, vividly illustrated by the author of the influential 'Bitter Cry of Outcast London' which disclosed how very little was known about homeworkers. By the time of the Trade Boards Act, there was a large body of empirical material about, and impressionistic accounts of, the workforce concerned. In the intervening period, a quarter of a century, homeworkers had become the subjects of political concern and the focus of a campaign which was for the home and against homeworkers. Ever since the early nineteenth century social policy had been closely associated with the accumulation of social and economic data by various government departments such as the Poor Law Board, the Local Government Board, the Home Office, the Board of Trade, Select Committees of the Houses of Commons and Lords, and Royal Commissions. Individuals played their part also in the accumulation of facts on homeworkers: Charles Booth; Beatrice and Sidney Webb; and organisations like the Women's Industrial Council and the National Anti-Sweating League, especially in their sweating exhibitions which conducted surveys on homework and homeworkers. The importance of such data has been frequently noted by historians of the period, most notably José Harris and Pat Thane. Changes in social policy have been characterised as either the product of ideological commitments, for example, Fabianism and new Liberalism; or as a largely functional response to environmental change and economic conditions. Nineteenth century 'social science' aimed to have public policy based on the accumulation of empirical data, but that work has been shown to be mostly to do with the classification of material rather than being analytical and
prescriptive, and the main achievement was a mass of detailed information rather than coherent explanations of problematic social conditions. It has also been said that the accumulation of facts was sometimes, as in the Royal Commission on Labour (1891-1894), a substitute rather than a precursor, for action. The history of homeworking demonstrates the operation of both arguments about theories of change: that ideas about the amelioration of homeworkers' conditions derived from campaigning groups, ideas and information; and that the prevailing economic and environmental conditions also informed the debate centred on homeworkers.

MAKING HOMEWORKING AN ISSUE: WOMEN, JOURNALISM AND THE LAW

Female pressure groups such as the Women's Trade Union League, the Women's Industrial Council, and the National Federation of Women Workers were the central researchers into and propagandists about homework. They drafted bills for their growing body of parliamentary supporters, and lobbied key individuals like George Cadbury whose anti-sweating Daily News sponsored the 1906 Sweated Industries Exhibition, which was responsible for the founding of the National Anti-Sweating League. Although there was no unanimity as to the best solution to the homework problem, be it registration of homeworkers' premises, or wages or trades boards to decide minimum rates of pay in the lowest paid industries, there was agreement that something had to be done. Sensing that the political will was there, manipulated by their access to the Edwardian political intelligentsia, these female pressure groups led a concerted demand that the Liberal government act. The ambitious Winston Churchill at the Board of Trade took much of the credit for the Trade Boards Act 1909, but while he led it
through the House of Commons in a determined manner, it is worth considering why he took up this issue at this time.

In 1906 there was a quickening of pace for the amelioration of homeworkers' conditions in the short-term which was part of a long-term plan to abolish sweated labour once and for all. Central to this development was the new alliance formed between female pressure groups and the philanthropist George Cadbury. The products of this alliance were: a highly influential Press campaign spearheaded by Cadbury's provincial newspapers and the *Daily News* which culminated in the Sweated Industries Exhibition; the foundation of the National Anti-Sweating League and ultimately the appointment of the House of Commons Select Committee on Homework which heard evidence in 1907 and 1908. Furthermore, the Women's Trade Union League and the Women's Industrial Council, who had leading members in common, had political friends at the highest level, and several had husbands who were members of Parliament and even government ministers. Thus it was that the momentum for change came not only from a marriage of minds but from family ties. The pace for reform quickened because the alliance was supported by a communality of shared beliefs about the need to solve the homework problem, and its effectiveness was undoubtedly underpinned by a network of powerful and highly influential people. Social and family networks were at the heart of Edwardian government and the homework campaign clearly demonstrates this. A highly consensual group of influential people whose common concern was the 'scandal' of homeworkers' wages and conditions, formed an alliance around the homework issue. Their debate perpetuated the belief that homework defiled homes, and that those who engaged in it were enslaved and degraded by attendant poverty and squalor. The group was responsible for a high quality
campaign which was ensured mass circulation by Cadbury's newspapers. If not for this alliance there would not have been the first piece of minimum wage legislation in 1909. Motivated by public health fears and the concern for Motherhood, Race and Empire, the key players forsook contemporary reluctance to legislate on wages and the home, and were responsible for interference with the two icons of the Victorian and Edwardian era: the home and the free market in wages. The success of the campaign was a landmark in the politics of homework and the politics of the home.

The female pressure groups also had influential friends, including Lord Dunraven who had chaired the House of Lords Committee on the Sweating System in the late 1880s; the Labour Members of Parliament, G. Barnes and A. Henderson; senior Liberal politicians R.B. Haldane, G.P. Gooch, Sydney Buxton and Leo Chiozza Money were members of the Women's Industrial Council; and leading figures, most notably, Margaret MacDonald and Mary MacArthur, had husbands who were Labour politicians. The intellectuals, people like George Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells and Beatrice Webb, and leading churchmen, added prestige and influence to their organisations' letterheads. The importance of this network of influential men and women to the politics of homework cannot be overstated. It is difficult to imagine the course of events which we have analysed without the intervention of the 'great and the good'.

The Lancet and The British Medical Journal, who launched the campaign to deal with the problem of homework, and the Quaker-led editorials of The Daily News, were also central to the shaping of the political agenda. The influence of the editors of these journals and newspapers ensured that the public and politicians were alerted to the problem and reminded of it whenever political events could effect
change. These Press opinions insisted that homework was dealt with by legislation which interfered with the relations between labour and capital, via minimum wage legislation. This principle was unacceptable in the political climate of the 1880s and 1890s. The medical Press consistently urged closer inspection of homeworkers' premises, despite fears of the invasion of privacy, and The Daily News vigorously promoted minimum wage legislation.

EDWARDIAN SOCIAL POLICY AND THE HOMEWORK DEBATE

Britain's performance during the Boer War was reported and analysed in great detail. The war had diverted public attention from social issues. \(^{11}\) Available revenue was made a priority for the most urgent of problems, the physical deterioration of the working-class as evidenced by the rejection of at least a quarter of those who had tried to sign up and join the army. By the end of the war in 1902 it had become increasingly obvious that Britain had a less than sure foothold in the world, she was under concerted economic pressure from the United States and economic and naval pressure from Germany. From 1902 onwards there was a feeling among politicians, employers and the Press that not only had administrative and managerial efficiency to improve, but that the physical and productive efficiency of the workers had also to be improved. Such new attitudes gave an added urgency to the social issues discussed in the 1890s: poverty, old age, infant mortality and the falling birth-rate. British nationalism was stimulated in the post-Boer War period by the politicisation of these problems, and medical men had great influence in policy and administration, believing that improving the environment could significantly improve the condition of the poor. During
the Edwardian period employers increasingly provided their own resources for pensions, sickness benefits and better medical care; or demanded that the state take on this responsibility, within carefully prescribed limits.¹¹⁷)

Fears about the economy and the state of working-class children made politicians and employers receptive to measures of social reform that would have been wholly rejected before the Boer War. Lloyd George and Winston Churchill recognised the implications of the rise of the Labour Party as witnessed by the 1906 General Election and, listening to the radical wing of their own party, urged moderate social measures. Supported by Prime Minister Asquith, these two Liberal Cabinet Ministers were responsible for the party's social reform package, building on the groundwork of their Conservative predecessors in their 1900-1905 term of office, who had been informed by the concerns about the national interest given greater prominence in the period after 1902. The Midwives Act (1902) which demanded registration and better training was aimed at preventing avoidable infant mortality. When the Physical Deterioration Report was published in 1904 the activities of the feeding associations, founded in the late 1890s, to provide free meals to poor school children (in certain areas only) were thrown into a sharper focus. The earliest Mother and Baby Clinics and Milk Depots were in the spotlight in an almost emotionally charged political atmosphere. Working-class mothers would be bombarded with yet more leaflets and called on by what seemed like an army of lady health visitors. Informed by the findings and recommendations of the Deterioration Report, Liberal and Conservative backbenchers pressed the government to allow Poor Law Guardians to provide free school meals to the poorest school children. The Interdepartmental Committee on the Medical Inspection
and Feeding of Children of 1905 substantiated what social reform campaigners already knew. The considerable cost of the Boer War and the Conservatives' reluctance to increase taxation severely restricted the scale of the initiatives that the Government could consider. (13)

During 1906 - 1908 the Liberal government proposed little social legislation, the election had not been fought on social issues, and revenue was a problem which was to be tackled by Asquith's increase of the basic rate of income tax. The social reform put forward was narrow in focus and largely targeted at the nation's children: the provision of free meals for poor school children (1906); attempts to improve national literacy and technical skills (1907); school medical inspections (1907); attempts to analyse the causes of infant mortality and reduce it via the notification of births (1907); the Children's Act which tried to prevent deprivation, cruelty and neglect in early life, and hoped to reinforce responsible parenthood (1908). From 1908 the volume of Liberal social legislation increased, financed by Asquith's income tax changes. The retirement and death of Prime Minister Henry Campbell Bannerman, and the appointment of Asquith as his successor, brought Lloyd George as Chancellor of the Exchequer and Winston Churchill as President of the Board of Trade, both committed to social reform. José Harris, in her *Private Lives, Public Spirit: A Social History of Britain 1870-1914* (1993) argues that from 1907 there was a definite break with the past by Liberal ministers at the Treasury, the Board of Trade and the Home Office who framed and implemented a series of social policy measures. These activities stemmed from a fundamental change in political attitudes to what were considered to be private and public issues. Harris contends that the traditionally private and 'microscopic'
matters of child care, nutrition and physical exercise were increasingly treated as public and 'macroscopic' concerns of society.\(^{(14)}\) This then, was a new political context of the concern about homework and homeworkers.\(^{(15)}\)

**'HOME SWEET HOME': WOMEN, AND HOMEWORKING WOMEN**

This thesis has argued that the definition of the homework problem underwent considerable change between 1880 and 1909. Three major factors may be said to have influenced the definition of the problem and its place on the political agenda: the danger of infectious disease; the role of the home and changing perceptions about it; the role of women in society and especially their role as mothers of the Empire. The motto 'A Woman's Place is in the Home' was a mid-nineteenth century middle-class construct. The idea of the two gender-specific spheres, the public and the male versus the private and the female was reflected in the works of Charles Dickens and many others, and household manuals and etiquette books. Middle-class evangelicalism established the home as the main battleground against sin, and women's role in this war was closely defined. Middle-class families were held up as powerful models for working-class families to aspire to. 'The Home' had a powerful place in the political battlefield, and for feminists of the day it was not only a sanctuary for women, but more fundamentality, their prison. The militant suffragettes sought to liberate women's lives by the vote and to free them by winning access to another kind of house, the House of Commons, which they argued would bring them political and economic freedom and independence.

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Evangelical domestic ideology stressed the importance of mothers, and their homes as holy places.\textsuperscript{(10)} Homeworkers, often described as squalid, vile, miserable creatures, were violating 'the home'. The reality of working-class lives would not be accommodated to the nightmare that commentators on homework described and the vocabulary about homeworkers remained frozen while the debate lasted. It could have been argued, and it was by a tiny minority of contemporaries, that given the endemic poverty that was the norm evidenced by all the empirical studies of homeworkers, and given these women's need to earn a wage, homework was a viable job. Importantly, it enabled mothers to remain in their homes and supervise their children and complete domestic chores. However, the power of domestic ideology was so pervasive that such views had little influence and 'the home' was further sanctified by the homework campaign. The contradiction between bourgeois economic interests and morality was not resolved and the attack on homeworkers gathered speed.

Closely allied to the above were the changing definitions as to the role of women in society, and their status as mothers of the race. They were called Race-Builders, and Mothers of the British Empire. Their roles had expanded, for the future of the Empire lay in the execution of their duties and mothers. Every change in the definition of the homework problem - from the public health menace through to the anti-sweating campaign reflected society's views of women, and particularly mothers', special roles. It was homeworkers' alleged reluctance to conform to these roles, and their shortcomings as mothers, which stirred and sustained the abolitionists' lobby, from the mid 1880s through to the passing of the Trade Boards Act. Homeworkers endangered the lives and homes of other mothers' children by making clothing and goods in squalid and disease-ridden rooms;
they polluted their own lives and the health of their offspring by working in such 'dangerous trades', they flouted the demands of the architects of motherhood, race and Empire.


The Trade Boards Act of 1909 remained for generations the main legislation addressed to homework. In part this was due to the strategy of the campaigners and the discourse which had evolved around the issue. The thesis ends in 1909 because nothing significant happened legislatively until 1921. Thereafter the homework issue largely disappeared from the public domain apart from the scheduling of five more sweated trades in 1913, sugar confectionery, shirt-making, hollow-ware making, linen and cotton embroidery and certain sections of the laundry trade. The addition of twelve more trade boards by 1921, representing three million workers, seventy per cent of them women, and many of them homeworkers was important but outside this study. Perhaps the main reason was that with the exception of Gertrude Tuckwell, all the chief protagonists who had politicised homework were dead by the early 'Twenties; Sire Charles Dilke and Margaret MacDonald had died in 1911; Mary MacArthur in 1921; George Cadbury in 1922 and Clementina Black in 1923. With the enfranchisement of women, Tuckwell became the first women to be a Justice of the Peace in London, and she was involved with the Labour Party and the Trade Union Congress. With the death of all the key figures, homework inevitably slipped from public interest, and was overtaken by the socio-economic and political consequences of the First World War. Homeworkers were
thereafter able to earn their living at home without being subjected to the intense scrutiny of a campaign which had vainly hoped to abolish it by dint of the gathering of statistics and legislation.

Ever since the re-discovery of homeworkers by the Low Pay Unit in the early 'Seventies, with the exception of the appearance of the new type of homework, 'telework' in the 'Eighties, perceptions about homework and the women who do it remain locked in a largely Edwardian legislative context, and are still influenced by many of the attitudes and prejudices which fuelled the abolitionists' lobby for the period reviewed by this thesis. Central to the phenomenon of homework being located in the context of 1909 was the widely held view that it had become extinct in the inter-war years. During the 'Twenties and 'Thirties homework certainly declined, but it did not disappear, it just became more hidden. Homeworkers were still able to find this kind of work, although supplies had diminished. During the inter-war years homework declined, but not women's need to do it. Certain home industries like matchbox-making, feather-dressing and artificial flower-making disappeared altogether. In the absence of statistical evidence it is fair to say that apart from those who worked in the clothing industry, it is highly likely that Spitalfields' homeworkers suffered a slow decline, due to changing trade conditions which made homework unattractive and the greater mechanisation and sub-division of labour in factories and workshops. The inter-war years saw the appearance of a number of new industries which did not find homework an attractive proposition. Rapidly changing fashions made many homeworkers redundant, for example in the feather-dressing industry. The successful operation of the Trade Boards Act made homework increasingly attractive to certain
employers. Finally, many women gave up homework in search of better pay and working conditions.\(^{18}\)

Since the 1960s, the Low Pay Unit has been responsible for raising the issue of homeworkers more than any 'Think Tank', group or political party. Even though trade boards still existed under the name of Wages Councils, homeworkers were as hidden and exploited as they ever had been. Because of the divergence of opinion within the trade union movement in the late 'Fifties, when the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers were divided on whether to campaign for the abolition of homeworkers in their industry, or to work for legislation and recruit them into their union, little was achieved other than issuing statements of condemnation or recommending investigations into homeworking in the clothing trade. There was no coherent policy in this or any other union affected by the use of homeworkers until awareness was raised by the Low Pay Unit's campaign.\(^{19}\) Despite twenty years of investigation by the Unit, the Fabians, the Trade Union Congress, the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers, the Department of Employment and the National Homeworking Unit, and sporadic newspaper articles, there are still few reliable statistics about the number of women doing homework, or on their pay and conditions of work. Most is known about teleworkers who, with their modern technology, have a more positive image than today's manufacturing homeworkers in the clothing, gift, and electrical components industries.

The National Homeworking Unit estimates there may be a million homeworkers in Britain in the 1990s,\(^{20}\) and that figure could increase as employers turn to this cheaper, easily controlled workforce. High rents, rates, union rates of pay and the implications of employee status mean that homework is an attractive
proposition. Homeworkers of the 1990s, like their counterparts in the 1890s, are as unregulated as they were a century ago. Their status today is no better than it was then - because they are deemed to be self-employed they have no paid holiday or sick pay, maternity leave or pay, pensions, redundancy or notice rights. Their recent partial re-discovery has not led to any legislation. Local authorities still have responsibility for their health and safety, but few execute these duties. In Tower Hamlets today it is the case that while lists of homeworkers are still kept, they are notoriously unreliable, out of date and inaccessible. (21)

The National Homeworking Unit was established within the Wages Inspectorate in the 'Seventies, and in the 'Eighties central government lost what little interest it had in homeworkers. Some successful attempts to monitor and improve their pay and conditions have happened at the local level, with councils like Hackney, Haringey, Greenwich, Leicester and Birmingham appointing their own Homeworking Officers. It remains the case that homework does not fall within protective legislation, and inspectors do not have the authority to enter a person's house unless they are invited. Attempts to unionise homeworkers have, because of their isolated conditions and their history of under-cutting factory costs, been half-hearted. Very few are unionised, their wages and conditions are poor. (22) Thus despite the best efforts of nineteenth century reformers, homework has continued to be pursued in the poorest of homes. Rather than being gradually abolished by regulatory legislation, it has survived and may even have flourished. Some homeworkers benefited from the minimum wages decreed in the Trade Board Act. The campaign came to legislative fruition in 1909, but
did not succeed in ending this kind of work, rather it drove it further underground and reinforced its covert nature.

The abolition of the Wages Councils on 31st July 1993 - the late twentieth century incarnation of the 1909 Trade Boards - was the final act of the century-old discussion about minimum wage legislation. The Wages Councils have been swept away and so the last vestige of the Victorian and Edwardian debate on the lowest paid workers in Britain, has, in legislative terms, come to a close. The poorest paid workers, of whom homeworkers form a significant proportion, are left without any specific legal protection. While it is unlikely that homeworkers have ever relied on Wages Councils to protect their meagre wages - the hidden nature of their work, and their isolation in their own homes - has meant that the existence of a minimum wage has made very little impact on their lives. The Trade Boards, named Wages Councils in 1945, however important they may not have been in the lives of homeworkers, have gone away.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has sought to redress the imbalance in the history of a much neglected area of employment and industrialisation by examining in some detail the experience of Spitalfields. With the benefit of historical hindsight, the Jewish attitude in London during the period studied provides an interesting perspective for contemporary analysis of the problem. Nathan and Hermann Adler and Lewis Lyons, at opposite ends of the spectrum of Anglo-Jewry, understood that the homework issue would raise unwelcome questions with important ramifications, and apparently chose to ignore it. However, as we have sought to show, debating the existence of homework in their
community in the terms defined by the campaign would have caused unacceptable problems. The Adlers and Lyons undoubtedly wished to avoid any investigation which might have been a criticism of Jewish people working in 'squalor' in their own homes. Radical, Christian and middle-class reformers were not so sensitive to such criticism, and were prepared to expose working mothers and dirty homes in order to ameliorate the situation by abolition via legislation. They tried to apply the principles of industrial reform to the home: if factories were regulated, then so should be homes if work was done there. They used the same strategy and rationale in their expressed determination to legislate for the safety of the home necessarily condoning the invasion of the home by inspectors. The Jewish community was hostile to this and did not see a conflict between the domestic economy and industry. Even if the work done in the home was construed as part of industrialisation, they did not view it as a problem. The home was the focus of solidarity and community. If the Chief Rabbi could say that he too was sweated, then this permitted homework to be removed from the political arena and located very firmly in the private domestic sphere. The reaction of the Jews of Spitalfields to the campaign against homework was significant in that it illustrated the ambiguous status of women (who had traditionally worked at home) in an industrialised society. Perhaps therefore London Jewry in Spitalfields and elsewhere were not denying homework so much as defending the home against intrusive bureaucracy.

Spitalfields's homeworkers were part of Britain's industrial army and were engaging in this work for several generations prior to the starting point of this study. Homeworking ran in the family because there always had been a need for women to contribute to the domestic economy: in industrial society this has meant participation for many
through manufacturing in the home for money. Historians of industrialisation have failed to take account of homeworkers as members of the workforce or assess their impact on production, and have not considered as fully as they might, the effect on homes and families. It is hoped that by examining the campaign against homework this thesis has served to remedy this neglect.
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The Guardian, 11th May 1989, p.21
Morning Star, 30th November 1989, p.2 and 21st August 1990, p.3
The Observer, 16th December 1990, p.38
The Guardian, 19th December 1990, p.23
The British Press has taken the view that the new homeworkers - 'teleworkers' - who work at computer terminals installed by their employers in their own homes - are the most positive development in homeworking: The North West Times 'A Re-think on the Art of Homework?' The Financial Times 'Homeworkers Deserve Some Serious Study' and The Daily Express 'Homeworkers Top of the Class'
The North West Times, 22nd September 1988, p.13
The Financial Times, 25th February 1989, p.5
The Daily Express, 5th March 1990, pp.18-19

3. Fabian Tract 436, 1975
Low Pay Unit, Wages of Fear, 1978
Low Pay Unit, Sweated Labour: Homeworking in Britain Today, 1984
Low Pay Unit, Wages Councils and Homeworkers, 1990
Birmingham City Council, Report of the National Homeworking Unit, 1989
The London-Wide Homeworking Conference, 1989

4. Report of the National Homeworking Unit, April 1988 - October 1989, p.4

5. The origins of The Low Pay Unit's interest in homework are to be found in the national survey of poverty carried out in 1968-9. The survey revealed that homework was as prevalent in the '60s as it had been in the late Edwardian period when legislation had addressed the problem. One of the researchers, Marie Brown, played a key role in bringing her findings on women's poverty, which discovered the forgotten homeworkers, to the attention of The Low Pay Unit. Before her death in 1983 she worked for the Unit as a research Officer.
6. The concept of homework is well defined: 'Any work done at home, especially as distinguished/distinct from work done in a shop or a factory' and 'Any work done at home, especially done on contract for manufacturers or middlemen'. I would like to elaborate two definitions and say that for the purpose of this thesis, homework be described as work which was done in the workers' own homes, was usually collected from a manufacturing warehouse by the homeworkers, or delivered to the home by middlemen or middlewomen who sub-contracted the work at low rates of pay. A semi-skilled or unskilled workforce, it was paid at piece-rates. 'Outwork' is another term. Quite different from homeworkers, some factory and workshop employees were given further work to be completed at home: this is 'outwork'. Homeworkers were sometimes erroneously called outworkers.

Shorter Oxford Dictionary, p. 977
Random House Dictionary, p. 679


9. Ibid, pp. 147-8


11. Ibid, p. 147

12. Ibid, p. 52


15. Ibid, p. 194

16. Ibid, pp. 233-236

17. S. Pennington and B. Westover, op cit, pp. (ix)-(xi)

18. S. Allen and C. Walkowitz, Homeworking: Myths and Realities, 1987, p. 2

19. J. Harris, Unemployment and Politics: A Study in English Social Policy 1886-1914, 1972
P. Thane (Ed), The Origins of British Social Policy, 1978

20. P. Thane (Ed), The Origins of British Social Policy, op cit, p. 19
22. P. Levine, *Victorian Feminism 1850-1900*, 1987, pp.11-16
24. Ibid, pp.295-296
27. Ibid, p.50
28. Ibid, p.82 and p.101
32. K. Israel, 'Drawn From Life': Art, Work and Feminism in the Life of Lady Emilia Dilke, 1840-1904', University of Rutgers PhD, 1992, pp.487-490
M Vicinus (Ed), *A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women*, 1977, pp.147-152
REFERENCES - CHAPTER 1

THE POLITICS OF HOMEWORK IN THE 1880s

1. Whether people were Jewish was guessed by their surname and place of birth.


3. The Medical Officer of Health's Report for Whitechapel for the quarter ending June 1880, pp.6-7

4. Kelly's Directory, 1881

5. Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, 1884/5, Vol.30, p.171, q.5229

6. The imbalance of the ratio of males to females can be accounted for by the presence of several common lodging houses in the district, in Thrawl St, Flower and Dean St and Dorset St, which provided cheap accommodation for unmarried labourers employed at the docks, the markets and on building sites.

7. Census data was trawled noting all examples of women who were enumerated as doing work which could have been done at home. It was noted that certain districts had fewer homeworkers than others. District 13 (Bell Lane Court, Bell Lane, Tilly St, St Ann's Place, Wentworth St and Wentworth Court) where the ratio of women doing homework was 1 in 10; District 12 (Commercial St, Shepherd St and Shepherd St Buildings had a ratio of 1 in 3 and District 14 (Shepherd St, Palmer St, Freeman St, Tilly St and White's Row) had just under 1 in 6 women doing homework. The range varied from District 1 (Fashion St, New Court, Nelson Court and Flower and Dean St) where 1 in 2 women did it, and District 20 (Frying Pan Alley, Tripe Yard, Sandys Row and Raven Row) where the figure was 1 in 13. For discussion of the factors which could account for discrepancy in the enumeration see E. Higgs, 'Making Sense of the Census', History Workshop Journal, Spring 1987, pp.59-76, and D. Gittins, Fair Sex: Family Size and Structure, 1900-1939. 1982, p.95.

Jerry White's work on the residents of the Rothschild Buildings, three tenement blocks in Flower and Dean St, sheds some light on the homeworkers who lived there. The oral testimony he collected covers the late Victorian and Edwardian period. The Rothschild Buildings, opened in 1887, was housing intended for the Jewish poor. The Anglo-Jewish bourgeoisie was anxious to alleviate the housing shortage in this part of the East End in the wake of the influx of Eastern European Jews.
caused by the pogroms which followed the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881. White found that the largest single category of homeworkers was widowed mothers who took in washing, made cigars and cigarettes, were fur sewers and dressmakers and repaired clothes, boots and shoes. Residents of the Rothschild Buildings were not the poorest local residents as the rents were too high, he maintained. Nor were they examples of the most sweated of the East End, and he concludes: 'In part at least homework in the Rothschild Buildings with its stress on self-employment was an expression of the independence of the workers who lived there.'


9. Until 1851 Greater London was defined as the Metropolitan Police District, an area up to fifteen miles from the centre of London.

10. A. Briggs, op cit, p. 320


12. Women's pay was always low as they were at the bottom of the work hierarchy, see J. Treble, Urban Poverty in Britain, 1830-1914, 1979, p. 33


15. Ibid, pp. 33-4


17. An abbreviated version of The Song of the Shirt, Thomas Hood, 1843, quoted from C. Walkley, The Ghost in the Looking Glass, ibid, pp. 130-132

18. G. Stedman-Jones, op cit, pp. 40-41
S. Alexander, op cit, pp. 55-61

19. G. Stedman-Jones, op cit, pp. 44-48

20. Ibid, p. 99
Some comparative figures for women recorded as doing work which could have been homework in London in the 1881 Census: 70,416 milliners, dressmakers and staymakers; 26,401 shirtmakers and seamstresses; 18,477 tailoresses; 6,682 shoe and boot-makers and dealers; 2,950 upholsteresses; 2,793 furriers and skinners; 2,001 tobacco manufacturers and tobacconists; 1,910 brush-makers and broom-makers; 1,531 quill, feather dressers and dealers; 1,343 umbrella and parasol and stick-makers; 1,318 embroiderers; 1,299 hatters and hat manufacturers; 718
willowcane and rush-makers; 631 paper box and paper bag-makers; 609 sack and bag-makers; 485 straw hat and bonnet-makers; 163 weavers (undefined) and 9 shawl-makers.
Census Returns, 1881, 1883, Vol.80, Table 10, pp.12-19

21. The link between the articles of Henry Mayhew and the Reverend Mearns was George Sims' article 'Horrible London' first published as a piece of journalism in 1881.

W.J. Fishman states the author was not Mearns but W.C. Preston, see W.J. Fishman, East End 1888: A Year in the Life of the Labouring Poor, 1988, p.1

23. 'The Bitter Cry of Outcast London', 1883, p.4 and pp.9-10

24. George Sims' journalism dates from the late 1870s.
G. Sims, How the Poor Live', 1883, p.37

25. G. Sims, 'Horrible London', 1889, p.122

26. Ibid, p.69

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28. Ibid, p.166, q.5047

29. Ibid, p.171, q.5226-9

30. The Lancet, 7th June 1884, p.1059

31. Ibid, 10th December 1887, p.1175-77

J. Lewis (Ed), Labour and Love: Women's Experience of Home and Family 1850-1940, 1986, pp.5-8
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34. Ibid, Section 69, p.122

35. B.L. Hutchins and A. Harrison, A History of Factory Legislation, 1903, p.183

36. S. Pennington and B. Westover, op cit, pp.30-32


40. Ibid, p.459

41. Ibid, p.472


43. J. Schmiechen, op cit, p.72

44. S. Rowbotham, op cit, p.56


46. S. Taylor, op cit, pp.51-53


48. J. Treble, op cit, pp.92-94

49. Ibid, pp.102-3
   W.J. Fishman, op cit, p.118 and p.208

50. P. Thane, op cit, pp.31-4

51. P. Thane, op cit, pp.29-33 and p.38


53. P. Thane, op cit, p.40

54. Minutes of the Whitechapel Board of Guardians, 25th January 1887, St.BG/Wh/69, p.319


56. For the aims and objectives of the League's activities under her leadership see their Annual Reports 1875-1886 and issues of their monthly *Women's Union Journal*.


58. A.V. John, *By The Sweat of Their Brow* op cit, pp.36-60 and pp.135-159
J. Lewis and C. Davies, op cit, p.13
P. Malcolmson has studied the campaign to legislate for women in the laundry trade, op cit, pp.48-51

J. Lewis, *Women of England*, op cit, p.188

60. Philippa Levine, op cit, p.118

61. Ibid, p.119
J. Lewis and C. Davies, op cit, p.14

62. Ibid, p.14

63. Ibid, p.15

64. Kali Israel, op cit, p.486

65. P. Levine, op cit, pp.114-115

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68. R. Feurer, op cit, pp.248-249

69. J. Lewis and C. Davies, op cit, pp.13-14, 22-23

70. R. Feurer, op cit, pp.259-260


73. WTUPL *15th Annual Report*, June 1889, pp.3-4

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75. Ibid, 2nd *Annual Report*, June 1876, pp.6-7

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98. L.A. Tilly and J.W. Scott, op cit, p.188 and M. Vicinus (Ed), Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age, 1972, p.113
101. Ibid, pp.33-6
102. E.S. Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement, 1931, pp.418-419
103. S. Boston, op cit, p.28
104. From 1851-1881 'the occupations of women regularly employed from, or at, home were to be distinctly recorded' but they were often given just housekeeper's status. From 1891 the occupations of women and children were to be stated as well as those of men.
105. Census Returns, 1881, Registrar General's District, Whitechapel, sub-division Spitalfields, RG11 434-RG11 438
The female population of England and Wales in 1881 was 13,334,547. Thus, the figure of 890 was a tiny percentage of the total population, some 0.0006846%. The Jewish population of East London in the early 1880s has been estimated to be 30,000, hence Jewish homeworkers in Spitalfields were approximately just under three per cent of the total figure of East London's Jewish population.

P. P. Census, 1890/1, Vol.94, p.(i)

106. W. J. Fishman, East End Jewish Radicals 1875-1914, 1975, p.54
L. Marks, 'The Marginalised Heritage of Jewish Women in Britain', in T. Kushner (Ed), The Jewish Heritage in British History, 1992, p.114
The percentage of immigrant women who worked was slightly less than that of native English born women.
D. M. Feldman, Englishmen and Jews, op cit, pp.226-228


109. Ibid, pp.25-26


111. R. Burman, 'Jewish Women in the Household Economy in Manchester', op cit, pp.58-62
The same reluctance to discuss this type of economic activity was also noted by Anne Kershen in her studies of Leeds. Lara Marks argues that Jewish women were not marginal to the family income and that much of their wage-earning work was hidden from outsiders as it was performed around domestic chores and childcare. Even their involvement in the sweated trades was obscured because it was often carried out in family workshops situated within the home or in close proximity to it. These practices created the impression that Jewish mothers remained in the home more than other working mothers.
L. Marks, 'The Marginalized Heritage of Jewish Women in Britain', op cit, p.114 and pp.113-116

112. While one cannot doubt that some women engaged in economic activities to supplement the family income in Eastern Europe, it can no way be compared to the highly structured and booming industry operating in London at that time. Mendelsohn's is a classic work and nowhere does he refer to women's role in the
industrial structure. There were simply not the same opportunities or industrial background to do the type of homework as evidenced in the East End of London.

E. Mendelsohn, *Class Struggle in the Pale: The Formative Years of the Jewish Workers' Movement in Tsarist Russia*, 1970


D. M. Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, op cit

*The Jewish Chronicle, 1880-1910*

113. W. J. Fishman, op cit, p. 42


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118. D. Feldman, op cit, p. 203 and pp. 211-214

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122. A. J. Kershen, op cit, p. 105

123. *The Jewish Chronicle*, May 16 1884, p. 8, Col. B and p. 9, Col. A

124. D. Cesarani, op cit, p. 75

125. Ibid, pp. 70-80

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128. D. M. Feldman, op cit, p. 326

129. A. J. Kershen, op cit, pp. 222-223, 231-233

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131. W. J. Fishman, op cit, pp. 164-166, 168-177, 203-204

132. D. M. Feldman, op cit, p. 344

133. W. J. Fishman, op cit, pp. 174-177

134. *The Jewish Chronicle*, December 9 1881, p. 16, Col. A, ibid,

April 25 1884, p. 4, Col. B; p. 6, Col. B, ibid, May 21 1884, p. 11 Col. A

135. *The Daily News's Sweated Industries Catalogue, 1906, pp. 70-80*
132. A.J. Kershen, op cit, pp.219-220
133. Ibid, p.221
134. Ibid, p.181
135. Lewis Lyons, The Horrible Sweating System, 1885, p.1
136. Ibid, p.5
137. The Jewish Chronicle, September 2 1887, p.10, Col.B
138. A.J. Kershen, op cit, p.225
139. W.J. Fishman, op cit, p.170
140. Ibid, pp.170-171
141. Ibid, pp.174-176
142. Ibid, pp.177-183
143. Ibid, p.53
144. A.J. Kershen, op cit, p.181
145. Ibid, p.223 and pp.232-233
147. Ibid, p.4
148. Toynbee Hall was founded in 1884 in the heart of Spitalfields, as part of the University Settlement Association whose particular interest was social reintegration. The aims were: 1) to provide education and a means of recreation and enjoyment for people in the poorest districts, 2) to inquire into the condition of the poor and advance plans 'calculated to promote their welfare' and 3) to acquire and maintain a house for the residence of persons engaged in or connected with philanthropic or educational work. A. Briggs and A. MaCartney, Toynbee Hall: The First Hundred Years, 1984, p.3
J. Standish Meacham, Toynbee Hall and Social Reform, 1880-1914, 1988, p.(ix)
149. Report to the Board of Trade, op cit, 15-16
150. Ibid, pp.17-19
151. J. Schmiechen, op cit, p.135
152. The Earl of Dunraven, Conservative - Dod's Parliamentary Companion, 1888, pp.328-9
T. Dunraven, Past Times and Pastimes, 1922, Vol.2, pp.102-4

155. The Lancet, 3rd March 1888, p.430

156. The British Medical Journal, 17th March 1888, p.604


159. East London Advertiser, 7th April 1888, p.5

160. House of Lords Report, op cit, p.54, q.562

161. W.J. Fishman, op cit, p.63

162. B. Gainer, op cit, pp.79-83

163. W.J. Fishman, op cit, pp.147-8

164. House of Lords Report, op cit, pp.131-3, q.1361-67

165. Ibid, p.133, q.1371

166. House of Lords Report, op cit, pp.149-151, q.1520-62

167. Ibid, pp.152-4, q.1563-1615

168. Ibid, pp.155-6, q.1616-53

169. Ibid, pp.158-9, q.1663-91

170. Ibid, p.159, q.1692-1728

171. Ibid, pp.161-2, q.1729-56

172. Ibid, pp.241-7, q.2573-2636

173. Ibid, pp.356-8, q.3605-24

174. The Lancet, 14th July 1888, pp.73-4


176. House of Lords Report, op cit, pp.796-8, q.8267-88


181. Ibid, pp.453-4, q.16650-58

182. Mr E.S. Norris, Progressive Conservative MP for Limehouse, Tower Hamlets since November 1885

*Dod's Parliamentary Companion*, 1888, pp.299-300


184. House of Lords Second Report, op cit, p.440, q.16514

185. Ibid, pp.440-74, q.16514-16824

186. Ibid, p.458, q.16696-99 and p.460, q.16720

187. Ibid, p.286, q.2906-17

188. House of Lords First Report, op cit, p.494, q.5048

189. Ibid, p.522, q.5125

190. Ibid, p.422, q.4349

191. Ibid, p.325, q.3308-3366

192. Ibid, p.515, q.5274-76

193. Ibid, p.195, q.1967 and p.200, q.2025

194. Ibid, p.147, q.1492


196. Ibid, p.774, q.8026

197. Ibid, p.268, q.2743 and p.135, q.387


199. Ibid, pp.73-4

1889 saw the publication of Volume 1 of Charles Booth's *Life and Labour of the People of London*. A wealthy businessman, in his forties in the 1880s, he was concerned about poverty and unemployment. He attended lectures at Toynbee Hall and discussed these problems with socialists and philanthropic social workers. He had no time for Socialism and was highly sceptical of H. Hyndman and the Social Democratic Federation's claim that 25% of Londoners, roughly one million, lived in poverty. Dismissing these claims, he started his own inquiry into poverty. The seventeen volumes of *Life and Labour* were the result. During his research he came to the view that the
SDF had underestimated the problem, and that the figure was 33%. See R. Fried and R.M. Elman, Booth's London: A Portrait of The Poor at The Turn of The Century From His Life and Labour of The People of London, 1969, pp.xvii-xxiv

K. Bayles unpublished research conducted at the London School of Economics

D. Reeder, Introduction to Booth's Descriptive Map of London Poverty, 1984, pp.1-4

200. House of Lords Fourth Report, op cit, pp.3-16, q.17378-17494

201. The British Medical Journal played a smaller role in the homework debate during the 1880s and beyond. Founded in 1832 as the Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal, it was first published as the British Medical Journal in October 1840. It always had close ties with the British Medical Association and aimed: 'To foster social and scientific intercourse and also promote the interests of the non-metropolitan practitioners'. Its main competitor was The Lancet. By the 1840s medical journalism was vibrant and reflected the lively state of current medical reform questions. Its second editor Ernest Hart was brother-in-law to Canon Barnett and had worked on The Lancet in its earliest days. Hart and Wakley loathed each other. One of the main features of the editorship of the British Medical Journal from the 1860s to the 1890s was the attention paid to social medicine, and the periodical sought not only to inform its readers of recent developments in such matters, but aimed to influence developments and initiate public debate. Under the next editor Dawson Williams, the journal was less controversial in the subjects covered, but reflected the concern felt by him on issues such as physical deterioration, the provision of school meals and school medical inspections. Williams edited the British Medical Journal beyond the period covered by this thesis. Given its background and staff, its response to the alleged public health issues of homework and homeworkers was entirely consistent.


203. Ibid, pp.32-5

204. Ibid, p.129

205. Ibid, pp.129-130

206. A microbiologist, Dr Shelley Heard, Consultant Microbiologist at St Bartholomev's Hospital, West Smithfield, London EC1, was interviewed by the author in May 1990, and stated that it was likely that such illnesses could have been passed to consumers via goods and especially clothing made in insanitary and contaminated premises. However, today local environmental health officers for the Bethnal Green Neighbourhood, which includes Spitalfields, do not give special attention to their homeworkers. They respond to information passed on to them by their Infectious Diseases Clerk, and deal with each case as a public health matter. While it was agreed that droplet infection could, in theory, contaminate clothing, they do not
target homeworkers as a potential public health risk, and have no proactive programme of dealing with them in this way. Their own health inspector pointed out that homework is not perceived by his department to be a significant source of infectious disease.

Mr M. Mulcahy, Health and Consumer Services Officer, Bethnal Green Neighbourhood, London E2, interviewed by the author, December 1991

207. The Lancet, 23rd March 1889, p.588-9

208. House of Lords Fourth Report, op cit, pp.476-9, q.31898-31900

209. Mr Baumann, Conservative MP for Peckham since November 1885, Dod's Parliamentary Companion, 1890, p.178

210. The Lancet, 31st August 1889, p.439


212. House of Lords Fifth and Final Report, 1890, Vol.17, p.(iii)

213. East London Advertiser, 15th April 1890, p.5

214. House of Lords Fifth Report, op cit, pp.c-c1 and p.xliv

215. Ibid, p.xlv

216. Hansard, House of Lords Debates, 9th June 1890, Vol.345, Col.283-4

217. Ibid, 10th June 1890, Vol.345, Col.446

218. Ibid, Col.476

The Earl of Wemyss was President of the Liberty and Property Defence League which was founded in 1882. It was a pressure group which opposed legislation and was in favour of extreme laissez-faire. Given strong support from commerce and industry, the league was a broad coalition which took every opportunity to oppose legislation proposed by Parliament, including laws targeted at women workers. E. Bristow, 'The Liberty and Property Defence League and Individualism', The Historical Journal, Vol.(xviii), 4, 1975, pp.761-766

219. Sydney Buxton, Liberal MP for Poplar, Tower Hamlets, Dod's, 1888, op cit, p.190

220. Hansard, House of Commons Debates, 23rd June 1890, Vol. 345, Col.1651

221. H.M. Lynd, England in the 1880s: Towards a Social Basis for Freedom, 1945, pp.197-207


- 279 -
Because of the property qualifications, the East End constituencies of Whitechapel, Stepney, Poplar and St George in the East had small working-class Liberal voting electorates. Out of a population of 71,314 in Whitechapel the electorate numbered only 6,110; Stepney's population of 58,122 had an electorate of 6,925; Poplar's population of 74,104 had 9,340 electors and St George in the East has a population of 48,383 and an electorate of 4,317.

T. McCarthy (Ed) The Great Dock Strike of 1889, 1989, p.21
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THE HIDDEN WORKFORCE: DISCOVERING THE HOMEWORK PROBLEM


3. Ibid, p.19

4. Ibid, p.21

5. B.L. Hutchins and A. Harrison, op cit, p.213

6. Ibid, pp.140-1

Halévy said the Act was timid and permissive and merely allowed for the gathering of information.
At least one Spitalfields employer felt the weight of the new Act. Samuel Lesser, a cigar-maker of Crispin St, was fined a total of £17-14-0d for twelve summonses which included not keeping a register of his employees as required, not posting an abstract of the Act on his premises and for employing children and young persons (under 18).
East London Observer, 31st October, 1891, p.5


8. Ibid, p.121

The 1890s saw a peak of public interest in the Salvation Army's measures of Social Reform. The Webbs' warmly approved of this work, whereas trade unionists complained bitterly that the Salvation Army sweated the people they claimed to help, and undersold and sweated other workers.
J. Harris, pp.128-133 and The Graphic, 29th October 1892, p.510


12. R. Sandall, op cit, pp.121-5
The Darkest England Social Scheme: A Brief Review of the First Year's Work, December 1891, p.9

13. Ibid, pp.136-7

14. All the World, 1891, Vol.17, p.426

From 1894 to the end of the decade, sales of their matches began to decline - intense competition was the main factor. In 1894 the factory in Bow closed temporarily, re-opening in mid 1895. The local homeworkers they used suffered temporary unemployment and when they went back into production the Army could only afford to pay them three pence a gross and not the four pence a gross of 1891. It was still more than other London firms who only paid two pence three farthings a gross. The Darkest England Match Scheme went out of production in February 1900 and the factory closed down in 1901.
D.C. Mitchell, pp.16-30
1892 heard 'All the Principal Pantomime Artistes' singing sarcastic songs like 'Model England' which included: 'No Sweating is Allowed in Model England, To make the rough path smooth we've got a General Booth, and Poverty is dead in Model England' / 'We shudder when we think of France where sweaters thrive for years, where artificial flowers soaked in poor, weak women's tears, Until at last the poison works the women disappears, this is in France, not in Wealthy England.'
British Library, H 3981, m (48)

16. The Lancet, 15th October 1892, p.893

17. British Medical Journal, 13th May 1893, p.1021


19. Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health for Whitechapel for 1892, p.11

20. Ibid, Table p, p.36

21. Ibid, pp.21-2


23. J. Woodward, 'Medicine in the City', in R. Woods and J. Woodward (Eds), Urban Disease and Mortality in Nineteenth Century England, 1984, p.69

24. V. Berridge, op cit, pp.176-7

25. Ibid, p.179

26. Ibid, p.180
27. Ibid, p.194
28. Ibid, p.192
30. Ibid, pp.16-17
31. Ibid, p.19
32. Ibid, p.17
34. J. Walkowitz, op cit, p.22
35. Ibid, p.24
36. Ibid, pp.27-28
37. Ibid, p.28
38. P. Keating, op cit, p.20
39. J. Walkowitz, op cit, p.29
40. First Report of the Royal Commission on Labour, 1892, Vol.34, p.3
41. The Times, 22nd May, p.7; 23rd May, p.12; 3rd June, p.5; 26th June, p.10, 1895
   East London Observer, 17th January, p.6; 31st January, p.3; 18th April, p.6; 6th June, p.6; 15th August, p.5; 19th December, p.5, 1891
42. Dictionary of National Biography, 1901-1911, pp.323-29
43. Lady Dilke, 1840-1904, trade union leader, writer and art historian, married to the anti-sweating campaigner Sir Charles Dilke, MP. She was a leading figure in the Women's Trade Union League until her death in 1904. The *Europa Biographical Dictionary of British Women*, op cit, pp.126-7
44. Lady Dilke, 'Women and the Royal Commission', *Fortnightly Review*, October 1891, p.538
45. Sidney Webb, 1859-1947, social reformer and historian. From the late 1870s to 1891 he was a clerk in the Civil Service. In 1879 he met George Bernard Shaw and joined the Fabian Society, and from 1885 onwards wrote tracts for them. Resigning from the Civil Service in 1891, he was elected as a Progressive member for the London County Council for Deptford in 1892 and
held his seat until 1912. In 1892 he married Beatrice Potter and they published their History of Trade Unionism in 1894. 

Dictionary of National Biography, 1941-59, pp.935-7


47. Ibid, pp.299-300, q.3335-49

48. Ibid, p.369, q.5409

49. Ibid, pp.371-2, q.5439-5444

50. Ibid, p.378, q.5574

51. Ibid, pp.383-4, q.5698-5701

Little mention was made of female homeworkers to the Royal Commission in 1893.

In 1893 H. Hyndman of the Social Democratic Federation gave his views to the Commissioners on the perils of working mothers: 'It is directly injurious to them in every shape and way and helps enfeeble the coming generation owing to the weakness of the mothers after these long hours of standing and toiling.' Ibid, p.595, q.8409

52. Times' readers were reminded that sweating was not a British phenomenon. A report 'Sweating in New York' described their attempts to deal with the public health risks of clothing made in dirty and unhealthy places. Factory inspectors in New York urged that such goods be labelled 'tenement made' when 'exposed for sale'.

The Times, 8th March 1893, p.10


54. Clara Collet (1860-1947) left teaching to collaborate with Charles Booth on Life and Labour of the People of London, and then was one of the four Lady Assistant Commissioners to the Royal Commission on Labour. In 1893 she was appointed Labour correspondent to the Board of Trade.

The Europa Biographical Dictionary of British Women, op cit, p.105

May Abraham, one of the first two women factory inspectors appointed in Britain, in 1893.


Margaret Irwin, a leading figure in Scottish trade unionism and the Edwardian anti-sweating campaign.

S. Lewenhak, op cit, pp.102-4

55. Fifth Report of the Royal Commission on Labour, op cit, p.90, Section 262

56. McFeely, op cit, pp.10-11

H. Jones, 'Women Health Workers: The Case of the First Women
The correlation of low pay and morality was investigated by the Lady Assistant Commissioners. This has interesting implications for attitudes towards homeworkers in places like Spitalfields: 'Speaking generally, where wages are good, social habits are in correspondingly high levels; where wages are low the reverse is to be found.'

Fifth Report of the Royal Commission on Labour, op cit, p.538, Section 759

East End tailors who worked in Government contracts were being mobilised by the Government Workers Union right in the heart of Spitalfields. A mass meeting was held in September 1894 in Christ Church Hall 'for the purpose of denouncing the abominable sweating to which they are subjected'.

The Times, 21st September 1894, p.7

The infant mortality rates of the 19th century attracted little attention while the general death rate remained high. As early as 1837, the registration of births, marriages and deaths was required by law. Between 1860 and 1900 the general death rate had fallen by 15% and the death rate for infants, up to twelve months of age, had remained as high in the 1890s as it had been for the 1860s. The birth rate had entered a period of steady
decline. Anxieties over the implications of these figures provided a powerful impetus to the early infant welfare movement. By 1900 discussion of the causal relationship between high infant mortality rates and working mothers was two decades old. Legislative efforts were pursued in Britain and France in the 1870s. Britain introduced: the compulsory registration of births and deaths; lying-in houses were better regulated; child-minders and nurses were registered; in the 1890s legislation aimed at keeping mothers at home for at least the first four months after their confinement; women's working hours in 'dangerous trades' like glazing pottery (lead poisoning) were limited to try to safeguard infant life. L.A. Tilly and J.W. Scott, op cit, pp.172-3


71. José Harris discusses the language of race in the period 1870-1914: 'Although racial concepts infiltrated the language of social science and public administration they did not invariably have the specifically ethnic and exclusionary connotations a later generation might suppose... the use of racial language was often merely part of a wider organic metaphor. The terms 'racial progress' or 'racial decline' might refer to some ethnic superiority and separateness of the Anglo Saxon and British people, but they were just as likely to refer simply to the rate of reproduction or the state of the public health. The term 'racial' was frequently used as a synonym for 'physiological' and sometimes even for 'sexual'. The sinister sounding 'racial hygiene' was a favourite Edwardian euphemism for the habits of sexual intercourse and family planning.' J. Harris, Private Lives, Public Spirit: A Social History of Britain 1870-1914, 1993, p.236

72. The Times, 15th November 1894, p.7

73. For details on Gertrude Tuckwell see O. Banks, op cit, p.214

74. G.M. Tuckwell, The State and Its Children, 1894, pp.159-161
During 1894, 30.8% of total deaths in Spitalfields and Whitechapel were occurring in children under the age of twelve months and 50.1% of total deaths were occurring among the under fives. The figures for London as a whole were significantly lower: 24.4% for children under one year and 40.7% for the under fives. Despite the large number of 'Sanitary Works', poverty, dirt and disease claimed the lives of thousands of young children - the nation's assets.

Annual Report of the MOH for Whitechapel for 1894, p.3 and pp.8-9
Ada Heather Bigg, Jessie Boucherett and Helen Blackburn were feminists who vigorously opposed protective labour legislation devised specifically for women workers. The Women's Industrial Defence Committee, one of several feminist organisations opposed to any legislative interference with working women's lives, was founded in 1893. As well as campaigning against attempts to legislate homework out of existence, this organisation had a high profile criticising attempts to legislate on laundresses.

P. Levine, *Victorian Feminism*, op cit, p.91, p.104 and p.110

A. Heather Bigg, 'The Cry Against Homework', *Nineteenth Century*, December 1894, pp.970-974

Ibid, p.985

*The Times*, 17th January 1895, p.7

J. Morris, op cit, p.174

The Factory and Workshop Act of 1895, Public Acts 585 and 59 Vict, Chap.37, Section 42, p.88

Ibid, Section 6, p.74
The Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops, Mr Sprague Oram reported, with some satisfaction, the attempt to close at least one of the loopholes of the 1891 Act, concerning outworkers lists:

That Section (27 of the 1891 Act) only required those who have factories or workshops to keep lists of outworkers, so that a merchant... who employs one man as cutter out and delivers cloth to two or three outworkers has to keep a list; his neighbour who only gives out the cloth, but employs a large number of outworkers had not, under the old law, to keep a list. All merchants are now placed in the same position and the occupiers of all places from which any work of making up wearing apparel for sale is given out are required to keep a list of outworkers and forward a copy to the Inspector of Factories for the district twice a year.

Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for 1895, 1896, Vol.19, p.28
For the infant and child mortality rates and Sanitary Works carried out in Spitalfields and Whitechapel in 1895 see the Annual Report of the MOH for Whitechapel, 1895, pp.1-5 and p.38


The Women's Employment Defence League which was founded in 1891 and was headed by Bigg was an anti-protective legislation watchdog which mobilised opinion against any extension of the Factory and Workshop Acts. It was re-named the Freedom of Labour Defence Association in 1897.

P. Malcolmson, *English Laundresses* op cit, pp.51-54
84. *The Times*, 21st May 1895, p.12


86. *Ibid*, pp.165-7


88. Mrs Bosanquet had such a high regard for women's pivotal role in family life that she deplored married women's work. She believed that the solution to this 'problem' was to increase men's wages and thereby reduce women's need to work. As far as she was concerned the only women who should work were young women prior to marriage, and widows. From 1890-1894 she had lived in Hoxton, East London and done social work. J. Lewis, *Women in Social Action*, op cit, p.150, p.165 and pp.172-173

89. Mrs Bosanquet, *Rich and Poor*, 1898, pp.80-81


91. *Ibid*, p.117

92. The Women's Industrial Council was a women's organisation which allowed men to join. Theirs was an investigative role which aimed at a deeper understanding of women's working conditions in order to campaign for more effective legislation in the workplace. See also, E. Mappen, *Helping Women at Work*, op cit, pp.11-27


94. *Home Industries of Women in London*, 1897, p.5

95. The following 'hints' were given to the investigators:

Reports should be as life-like and as complete as possible. Details that seem in the individual case unimportant become significant when they occur again and again. Thus the appearance of good or bad health, cheerfulness or the reverse are points worth noting and so are any details that may be given of family history in the previous generations.

E. Mappen, *Helping Women at Work*, op cit, pp.88-94 and p.103

96. *Home Industries*, op cit, p.7

97. *Ibid*, pp.7-9

98. J. Schmiechen. *op cit*, p.71

99. Some examples of these comments are an insight into the Women's Industrial Council's investigators' attitudes to homework and the women who did it. Case 12 was a brush-drawer who was 'dirty and slovenly... and possibly drinks'; Case 7, a box-
maker, was 'dirty and untidy'; Case 4 was a shirt-maker, a single woman who supported her invalid sister; Case 14 was an umbrella case-maker whose husband was in work but whose earnings were poor, 'She has to neglect her home when she has the work'; Case 3, a sack-maker was 'poor and weakly' and whose supplies of work were erratic and whose health had been undermined by years of hard work and privation; and Case 43, a waistcoat-maker, said that she had to neglect her home duties if she wanted to make five waistcoats in two days.

See also, E. Mappen, Women workers and Unemployment, unpublished PhD, op cit, p.45

100. The Times, 24th November 1897, p.8

101. Ibid, p.7

102. Handbill, 'Bill for the Better Regulation of Home Industries', 1899, pp.1-4

Dr Loane, MOH for Whitechapel, reported no improvement in reducing the high levels of infant mortality locally in 1899. The mortality of infants was 26.6% of total deaths recorded there compared with an infant mortality rate of 24.7% of total deaths in London as a whole. For the under fives, the percentage for Whitechapel was 40.2% of total deaths and 36.1% for London as a whole.

The following 'Sanitary Works' were completed to try and make Spitalfields cleaner and disease-free: 801 rooms were disinfected with sulphurous acid gas after outbreaks of infectious disease; 62 cases of overcrowding were abated; 27,690 inspections of houses; 18,437 articles of clothing, beds and bedding etc were removed and disinfected; 354 closets were provided with water-supply and flushing apparatus; 31 houses were closed by magistrates or by consent as unfit for human habitation; and 303 nuisances from dung and other offensive matter removed.

Annual Report of the MOH for Whitechapel for 1899, pp.7-9

103. Women's Industrial News, December 1897, p.8

104. Women's Industrial News, September 1898, p.71

105. E. Mappen, Helping Women at Work, op cit, p.12

F. Levine, Victorian Feminism, op cit, pp.115-116


107. Women's Trade Union Review, April 1891, pp.22-3

108. S. Boston, op cit, pp.31-6

The Annual Reports of the WTUL and their monthly journal Women's Trade Union Review clarify these points.

109. Minutes of the Proceedings of the London County Council, 5th March 1889, item 17, p.45

110. Minutes of the Proceedings of the L.C.C., June 1890, item 28, p.483
112. Since the 1880s Lyons had criticised homework and called for its abolition, arguing that homeworkers undercut other workers' rates of pay and undermined the trade union movement's attempts to improve wages and conditions. The factory and workshop mode of production were favoured by him partly because factory law could be more easily enforced, and because employees could be more easily recruited into trade unions.

113. Minutes of the Proceedings of the L.C.C., 1891, item 27, p.378

114. Gibbon and Bell, History of the London County Council, 1889-1939, 1939, p.228

115. Minutes of the proceedings of the L.C.C., 1897, p.358

116. The Economics of Direct Employment, op cit, pp.2-4

117. Gibbon and Bell, op cit, pp.21-22 and pp.24-6

118. C. Cook and J. Stevenson, op cit. pp.67-8

119. H.V. Emy, op cit, pp.227-9

120. Ibid, pp.38-41

121. Ibid, pp.41-9

122. Ibid, pp.54-60

123. P. Thane, 'Government and Society', op cit, p.50


125. J. Morris, Women Workers and the Sweated Trades, op cit, p.171

126. Ibid, pp.172-4

127. Ibid, pp.177-88

128. S. Pennington and B. Westover, op cit, p.8

It is important to put the campaign against homework in the wider context of the many attempts to reform the lifestyles of the working-class by controlling its physical and institutional environment, viz: visiting the poor; blanket clubs; railway excursions; settlement houses; athletic sports; teetotal working men's organisations and penny savings banks.


129. 'Wages for workers in the London clothing trades (1890s to 1914) remained stationary or declined and in some cases the decline even accelerated... This static wage picture combined
with the rising cost of living after 1900 gave support to the frequent observation that the economic position of women was even worse than in the decades after the sweating investigation of 1888-1891.'

J. Schmiechen, op cit, p.64

130. E. Roberts, op cit, p.41
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MOTHERHOOD, RACE AND EMPIRE

1. Census Returns, 1901, 1902, Vol.120, p.85
2. Census Returns, 1901, 1903, 63 Vict, Chap.4, pp.722-4
5. Census Returns, 1901, 1902, op cit, Table 35, p.141 and p.145
6. Hansard, House of Commons Debates, 26th March 1901, Col.1387
8. Ibid, Section 109, p.112
9. Ibid, Section 110, pp.112-113
10. Factory and Workshop Act of 1901, op cit, Section 114, p.114
12. James Kenyon was a cotton and woollen manufacturer. Dod's Parliamentary Companion, 1900, p.287
14. Ibid, Col.653
15. Ibid, Cols.662-3
16. Cabinet Papers, Cab.37/56, piece 11
18. Ibid, pp.185-7  
In 1902 another attempt was made to get the Home Industries Bill through Parliament. As in 1899 and 1901, it did not succeed.  
Hansard, House of Commons Debates, 11th April 1902, Vol.106, Col.21

In November 1901 the Home Secretary issued a Home Work Order which extended the scope of the recent Factory Act to cover more home industries. Sections 107, 108 and 110 (outworkers' lists, work in 'unwholesome' premises and prohibiting homework in places where there were infectious diseases) were in future to apply to the following occupations: 'the making and cleaning, washing, altering, ornamenting, finishing of wearing apparel and any work incidental thereto; the making or ornamenting and finishing of lace curtains and nets; cabinet and furniture making; upholstery work; the making of electro-plate and fur-pulling'.  
The Times, 6th November 1901, p.12

20. E. Halévy, op cit, p.248


22. S. Pennington and B. Westover, op cit, p.108

23. Jack London (1876-1916) experienced extreme poverty as a child and left school at the age of thirteen. He became interested in Socialism and while amassing a fortune he became an ardent speaker and writer on the evils of capitalism and the virtues of Communism. He committed suicide in 1916. 

24. Ibid, p.13

25. Ibid, p.26  
He interviewed a number of homeworkers from the streets analysed in Chapter 1, women who worked from 'four-thirty in the morning to last thing at night making cloth skirts... for seven shillings a dozen'.  
Ibid, p.27

At Frying Pan Alley he saw:  
A spawn of children cluttered the slimy pavement... in a very narrow doorway... sat a women with a young babe, nursing at breasts, grossly naked and libelling all the sacredness of motherhood. In the... narrow hall behind her we waded through a mess of young life... and up a narrow and fouler stairway. Up we went... three flights... heaped with filth and refuse. There were seven rooms in this abomination called a house. In six of the rooms twenty odd people of both sexes and all ages, cooked, ate, slept and worked... In an adjoining room lived a women with six children. In another vile hole lived a widow, with a son of sixteen who was dying of consumption. The women hawked sweetmeats on the street.
London summarised the position of the women of Spitalfields and Whitechapel:

A woman... is as much the slave of her husband as is the Indian squaw... the men are economically dependent on their masters and the women are economically dependent on the men. The result is that the woman gets the beating that the man should give his master and she can do nothing. The wives become screaming harridans or broken-spirited and dog-like and lose what little decency and self-respect they have remaining over from their maiden days and all sink together, unheeding in the degradation and dirt.

Only tiny sums of money were spent on outdoor relief by the Whitechapel Board of Guardians. 1901 was a typical year: only ten pounds was spent for 'Poor Law purposes' and the estimated expenditure for 1902 was the same amount.

The MOH for Stepney's report on Spitalfields for 1902 certainly bears out some of Jack London's descriptions. A number of houses where homework was reported in the 1881 Census, were, by 1902, the most appalling and health-endangering hovels. If homework was still being done there then there were serious grounds for concern.

The MOH for Stepney recorded the number of outworkers and homeworkers in his district. As of 1st August 1904, the borough of Stepney, of which Spitalfields was a large part, had: 424 in tailoring; 20 blousemakers; 313 clothing workers; 10 ladies tailors; 26 mantle-makers; 39 shirt and collar-makers; 16 tie-makers; 21 trouser-makers; 4 underclothing makers; 156 boot, shoe and slipper-makers; 14 furriers; 22 hat and cap-makers; 2 upholsteresses and 548 others in 'unspecified trades'. Accurate figures would be higher than the above suggest. Considering the widespread concern about homework and its public health dangers, note the incidents of infectious disease reported in Spitalfields' homeworking streets: Bell Lane had 2 cases of scarlet fever; 1 of diphtheria and 3 of croup; Brick Lane had 9 cases of smallpox, 5 of scarlet fever, 1 of typhoid and 7 of diphtheria; Fournier Street had 4 cases of scarlet fever and 1 of diphtheria and Hanbury Street had 29 cases of scarlet fever, 2 of typhoid and 11 of diphtheria. The infant mortality rate was still high, 159 per thousand births.
30. Infant mortality, said *The Times*, was of particular concern: 'The most optimistic spirit cannot but admit that it offers a grave menace to the national vitality.' *The Times*, 17th September 1904, p.8

Two of the public theories of the day as to the causes of infant mortality were, firstly, that it was related to the employment of married women, and secondly, that ignorant and incompetent working-class mothers were wilfully disinterested in infant care. These attitudes helped mould the policy of the early infant welfare movement, and statements on women's waged labour. C. Dyhouse, 'Working-Class Mothers and Infant Mortality in England, 1895-1914', *Journal of Social History*, 1978, Vol.12, p.251

32. K. Jones, op cit, p.77

33. In the early 1900s controversy over 'the deterioration of the English race', working-class mothers were generally portrayed as ignorant and neglectful. Autobiographical accounts of that period portray them as being confident, loving, managing, caring and constantly planning and working for their families. E. Ross, 'Labour and Love: Rediscovering London's Working-Class Mothers, 1870-1918', in J. Lewis (Ed), *Labour and Love*, op cit, p.73

34. Physical Deterioration Report, op cit, p.31, q.164

35. Physical Deterioration Report, ibid, p.41, q.217

36. Ibid, p.41, q.227

37. Ibid, p.41, q.224

38. Ibid, p.402, q.10986-8

39. Ibid, p.379, q.10356; p.156, q.33658-61 and p.15, q.327


Similar fears were expressed in France, America, Australia and New Zealand.
See Deborah Dwork, Jane Lewis, Anna Davin, Ellen Ross

41. Physical Deterioration Report, op cit, p.47, q.251

42. Ibid, p.95, q.2184-8

43. The 53 Recommendations included: ending overcrowding; a register of sickness; labour colonies; preservation of open

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spaces; public nurseries; teachers to preach against 'the wickedness of drink'; compulsory attendance of girls at cookery lessons at school; Mothers' Meetings; registration of still births; milk depots and improved milk; feeding of 'necessitous school children'; school medical inspections; leaflets on child care and cadet corps for 'growing lads'.

Ibid, pp.84-92

44. Anna Davin describes the ways in which motherhood was given a new dignity in the aftermath of the Boer War. Their duty was to be the mothers of the race and this status was their greatest reward. Moral blackmail was used to persuade mothers of their responsibility for infant mortality and sick and unhealthy children.

Anna Davin, op cit, p.13

More recently, Ellen Ross has examined the two English generations before, and during the First World War when many of the building blocks of contemporary Western motherhood were laid. She discusses the discovery of the mother and her appearance on the political landscape from the 1870s onwards. By the 1880s she had been added to London's poverty cast of literary characters, along with the watercress girl, the cat's meat man and the muffin man. Between 1900 and 1918 motherhood had been transformed by the aims, objectives and activities of the infant welfare movement from 1904 to 1914.


45. Physical Deterioration Report, op cit, p.30, q.159, and p.49, q.1021

46. Ibid, p.474, q.12958-9

47. Ibid, p.479, q.13133-9


Recently, José Harris discussed the fundamental change in political attitudes in what were considered to be private and public issues during the Edwardian years: 'Within local government and the public health movement, such traditionally private and microscopic issues as child care, nutrition, physical exercise and personal hygiene were increasingly perceived as part of the public and macroscopic concerns of society, nation, Empire, race.'

José Harris, Private Lives, Public Spirit: A Social History of Britain 1870-1914, 1993, p.231

53. In 1901 the Women's Trade Union League decided that organising women in London was 'an impossible undertaking'. T. Olcott, op cit, p.33

54. N. Soldon, op cit, p.55 and The Europa Biographical Dictionary, op cit, p.265

55. WTUL 28th Annual Report, March 1903, p.4

56. Women's Union Journal, April 1903, pp.6-9

57. WTUL 28th Annual Report, op cit, p.13 and 29th Annual Report, p.15

58. Women's Industrial News, September 1902, p.328

59. Ibid, December 1902, p.344

60. Ibid, June 1903, pp.365-9

61. The Times, 18th December 1903, p.11

62. E. Mappen, Women Workers and Unemployment Policy, op cit, pp.52-5
REDEFINING HOMEWORK: POLICY AND POLITICS 1905-1908

1. Following the landslide General Election victory over the Conservatives in December 1905, the Liberal party was in power and remained so during the period under review.

2. The first exhibition of articles made by women under oppressive home conditions had taken place in Berlin in 1904, and had been a considerable success. In May 1904, Bethnal Green held a similar exhibition organised by a local vicar, Reverend J.E. Watts Ditchfield, which showed examples of sweated homework from his own parish. Although on a small scale and only open for two days, it had attracted a great deal of attention. The Daily News' Exhibition was a direct consequence of the events in Berlin and Bethnal Green in 1904.

3. In March 1906, the Labour MP for Leeds East, Mr O'Grady, asked in the House of Commons if the First Lord of the Treasury, W.G. Gladstone, would consider the advisability of appointing a Royal Commission 'to inquire into the evils [of the sweating system] particularly in the East End of London... with a view to legislation for its effective removal'. The Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman, refused. O'Grady asked again in May, mid-way through The Daily News' Exhibition. Gladstone, when pressed, ruled out any possibility of new legislation: 'They [the Government] were busy with other matters at present... I am afraid our powers of absorption are limited. I therefore cannot hold out any hope of a Royal Commission.' Hansard, House of Commons Debates, 15th May 1906, Vol.157, Cols.356-7

4. Morning Post, 4th May 1906, Gertrude Tuckwell Collection, Reel 5, File 217

5. Sweated Industries Catalogue, op cit, p.9


7. George Cadbury (1839-1922), chocolate manufacturer and social reformer. Brought up and educated as a Quaker, his mother was a keen temperance worker and his father ran the family firm. George and his brother Richard took control of the business in the 1860s. They breakfasted with their workers, were the first employers in Birmingham to provide half a day's holiday in the working week, and following their father's example they took a keen interest in the workers' welfare, moving the factory to healthier surroundings outside Birmingham at Bournville,
they provided model housing, welfare and education for their employees. George was involved in the Adult School Movement and taught many Birmingham workmen to read and write. He learnt a great deal about housing and factory conditions in the late 1890s. During the Edwardian years he took the lead in the campaign against sweated labour. His religious upbringing was central to his career as an employer and social reformer. Given his antecedents it is no surprise that he took the lead in the anti-sweating campaign and lectured and published on the subject.

Dictionary of National Biography, 1922-1939, p.1510-11

8. G. Wagner, op cit, pp.74-5


10. J. Keir Hardie, Socialist, and a new Independent Labour MP for Merthyr Tydfil (elected in 1900), an ex-miner who had been MP for West Ham from 1892-1895. Dod's Parliamentary Companion, 1908, p.268

C.F.G. Masterman, Liberal MP for West Ham since 1905, a Poor Law Guardian for Camberwell and a journalist and author. Ibid, p.305

L.G.C. Money, Liberal MP for Paddington N. since 1905, an author and journalist. Ibid, p.308

11. Sweated Industries Catalogue, op cit, p.4

12. Ibid, p.10

13. The Daily News, 4th May 1906, Gertrude Tuckwell Collection, Reel 5, File 217

14. Nessus was a centaur who offered to carry the beautiful Deianeira, the wife of Heracles, across the River Evenus. Heracles was to swim across. Nessus rode off with Deianeira and raped her. Heracles wounded Nessus with an arrow which he (the centaur) wrenched out, telling Deianeira that if she mixed the seed he (Nessus) had just spilt on the ground with the blood from his wound and olive oil and wove it into Heracles' shirt, then she would never again need to worry or complain about his infidelity. She did just this some time later when she heard of her husband's new mistress. She decided to use Nessus's charm and sent him the shirt. Heracles put it on in the presence of his new mistress. It corroded his flesh and could not be removed. His blood hissed and bubbled. Heracles threw himself into a stream, and then rampaged around the mountains and finally threw himself into the sea where he turned into rock of human appearance. When Deianeira heard about this she committed suicide.


15. Sweated Industries Catalogue, op cit, p.21

17. *The Daily News*, 5th and 7th May 1906, Gertrude Tuckwell Collection, Reel 5, File 217

18. *Sweated Industries Catalogue*, op cit, p.44

The East London Observer reported a sad case of a local homeworker: 'A poor half-starved looking woman named Sarah Searle, who had a baby in her arms was charged with acting as a pedlar without a licence. The defendant sat selling paper ornaments. She said her husband had not earned a penny for six weeks and they had three children. As they were starving she borrowed a few pence to make the paper ornaments. Mr Mead [the Magistrate] fined her five shillings or five days in prison. The defendant said she had no money.' *East London Observer*, 29th December 1906, p.3

19. *Sweated Industries Catalogue*, op cit, p.45

20. Ibid, pp.49-50

21. Ibid, pp.27-30

22. Ibid, p.6

23. Ibid, pp.49-50

24. Ibid, pp.95-8

25. Ibid, pp.86-9

26. Ibid, pp.91-5


28. National Anti-Sweating League handbill and Membership Form, undated

29. For more details on the Guildhall Conference in October 1906, see J. Schmiechen, op cit, pp.166-7

30. The N.A.S.L. would: 1) Further educate the public as to the evils of sweating and its causes; 2) Promote early and drastic legislation for its prevention as far as possible, and 3) Encourage the substitution of fair conditions of labour by establishing a system whereby sweated goods may be distinguished from those honestly produced and create an effective demand for the latter.' The success of such experiments in America, Switzerland and France was a positive encouragement, they said. *Yorkshire Observer*, 28th June 1906, Gertrude Tuckwell Collection, Reel 5, File 225
31. S. Pennington and B. Westover, op cit, pp.120-1

32. Manchester Weekly Times, 20th July 1907, Gertrude Tuckwell Collection, Reel 4, File 202

33. For details of the Women's Labour League, see C. Collette, For Labour and For Women: the Women's Labour League 1906-1918, 1989, pp.8-39

34. 'A Short Guide to an Exhibition of Articles Made Under Sweated Conditions' at St John's Institute, Westminster, November 2nd 1907

35. In February 1907, The Sweated Industries Bill was introduced and read a second time in April. Its aim was: 'To improve the conditions of employment including the establishment of a legal minimum wage of persons employed in certain industries.' It failed to progress beyond the second reading.

Hansard, House of Commons Debates, 15th February 1907, Vol.169, Col.420

Ibid, 15th April 1907, Vol.172, Col.559

Alongside this Bill, the Homework Regulation Bill made a brief appearance on 21st February and on 16th April, and failed to proceed beyond its second reading.

Ibid, 21st February 1907, Vol.169, Col.1057

Ibid 16th April 1907, Vol.172, Col.780

36. The Daily News, 18th September 1907, Gertrude Tuckwell Collection, Reel 15, File 217

37. The Scottish Council for Women's Trades organised a sweating exhibition at the Charing Cross Hall in Glasgow in October 1907. Its scope was broad: 'It concerns the public health and the public morals, religion and education, the housing of the poor, the interference of the State with economic processes of the nation and many similar questions.'

The Duchess of Montrose worried about the moral and biological aspects of homework:

'The implications of this question cannot be over-rated as it affects not only the health and wellbeing of hundreds of poor women but it also affects the health of the next generation. For if these mothers are overworked and underpaid and underfed, the health of the children must necessarily suffer. Can we wonder at the degeneracy of children who are born and brought up under such conditions?

Report of the National Conference on Sweated Industries, 1907, p.5 and p.70

Viscount Milner who opened the N.A.S.L. exhibition at Oxford in December 1907, stressed the effect on the community as a whole from homework. He portrayed sweated homework as handing a terrifying legacy onto future generations:

'They live miserably, grow old too soon, and bring up sickly children... they would not live at all if it were not for the fact that their inadequate wages are supplemented... by outdoor relief... and numerous forms of charity... the greatest concentration was the supreme interest of the community in the efficiency and
welfare of all its members and to say nothing of the stain upon its honour and conscience which continued tolerance of this evil involves.

N.A.S.L. Handbill, Sweated Industries - The Opening of the Sweated Industries Exhibition at Oxford, December 1907, pp.1-3

38. The Lancet, 26th October 1907, p.1198

39. N.A.S.L. pamphlet, 'Sweated Industries - A Plea for the Underpaid Workers', 1907, p.11

40. M. Irwin, The Problem of Homework, 1907, p.25 and p.30
   The Homework Regulation Bill was canvassed by the League and others.
   The Homework Regulation Bill, 1907, 7 Edw 7, Bill 158, pp.1-4

41. The Sweated Industries Bill was canvassed again in 1907.
   The Sweated Industries Bill, 1907, 7 Edw 7, Bill 27, pp.1-4

42. C. Black, Sweated Industries and the Minimum Wage, 1907, p.2

43. Ibid, pp.132-3

44. Ibid, pp.140-141

45. Ibid, pp.258-9

46. Labour Leader, 17th May 1907, Gertrude Tuckwell Collection, Reel 6, File 225

47. Report of the National Conference on Sweated Industries, Glasgow, October 1907, pp.39-42

48. Yorkshire Weekly Post, 6th July 1907, Gertrude Tuckwell Collection, Reel 4, File 202

49. The Homeworkers' Association was founded in Bethnal Green in 1904 by the Reverend Wickham and was based on a network of lady visitors and clergymen. They provided an insurance fund, paid holiday benefits to its members and informed homeworkers about the wages which were due to them. A. Gillespie, Politics and Political Change in the East End of London, unpublished PhD, Cambridge, 1984, p.277

50. Morning Post, 25th March 1907, Gertrude Tuckwell Collection, Reel 4, File 202

51. The Daily Chronicle, 9th April 1907, Gertrude Tuckwell Collection, Reel 4, File 202

52. East London Observer, 6th July 1907, p.6
   The British Medical Journal included lengthy articles on infant mortality that year: In February, 'The London County Council and Infant Mortality'; in April, 'The Bradford Conference on Infant Mortality'; and in December, 'The Huddersfield Scheme and Infant Mortality Prevention in Islington'.
   British Medical Journal, 16th February 1907, p.401; 16th April 1907, p.833, and 7th December 1907, p.1868, and 14th December 1907, p.1727
The play *Warp and Woof* was written and produced in 1908 by Edith Lyttleton. It told the story of sweated dressmakers in the West End of London. Mrs Patrick Campbell played the part of the fitter at Madame Stefanie's fashionable dress salon. It was a story of overworked and underpaid girls, unreasonable customers, and women's health broken by the work, the wages and the conditions. Phoebe died of tuberculosis after being sacked for answering the factory inspector's questions.

E. Lyttleton, *Warp and Woof*, 1908, pp.1-123

Cheap and minimal though these 1908 measures were, they indicated the perceived importance of social measures to nullify the advance of the new Labour party and organised trade unions.


J. Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit*, op cit, p.207

The Sweated Industries Bill, Bill 27, 7 Edw 7, pp.1-2

Hansard, House of Commons Debates, 21st February 1908, Vol.184, Cols.1196-1201

Ibid, Col.1202

Mr P. Alden was also a journalist, a lecturer and Quaker, and Honorary Secretary of the Friends' Social Union, a Councillor for West Ham from 1892 to 1901, was its Deputy Mayor in 1898 and editor of a series of Social Science Handbooks.

Dod's Parliamentary Companion, 1908, op cit, p.203

Hansard, House of Commons Debates, 21st February 1908, op cit, col.1203

Ibid, Cols.1205-7

Ibid, Cols.1239-43

The *East London Observer* took a dim view of the Sweated Industries Bill believing it to be 'at once Protectionist and Socialistic' which illustrated 'the danger of throwing over principles for the sake of hard cases'.

*East London Observer*, 29th February 1908, p.5


Cab.37/91, piece 26, p.106

The Gertrude Tuckwell Collection at the Trade Union Congress Library includes an extensive selection of newscuttings on these two bills under discussion in 1908, Reel 4, File 202

Hansard, House of Commons Debates, 3rd November 1908, Vol.195, Col.998

Dod's Parliamentary Companion, 1907, pp.211-2

The Homework Regulation Bill, 1907, 7 Edw 7, Bill 158, pp.1-4
Miss Nora Vynne was a well-known figure in Glasgow working for reform in industries which employed women. She was a novelist and dramatist who lectured on homework and sweating and was the founder of the National Homeworkers' League. Gertrude Tuckwell Collection, Reel 4, File 202
premises; 'Common humanity as well as public welfare demands that the experiment should be made.'

E. Cadbury and G. Shann, *Sweating*, 1908, p.134

A spirited defence of homework was maintained during the year by *The National Homeworkers' League*. Its activities received a significant amount of press coverage: *Pall Mall Gazette*, 2nd April; *The Morning Post*, 2nd April; *The Evening Standard*, 7th April; *The Leicester Post*, 2nd April, and *The Evening Standard*, 25th August.

The rules for *The Homeworkers' League* clarified their political campaign on homework. It had been founded to protect the liberties of homeworkers all over the country and was affiliated to the Freedom of Labour Defence. The weekly subscription of a penny a week was to defend them against 'undue constrictions and for no other purposes whatever'. When any homeworker was attacked a representative would be sent to investigate the matter and would take the necessary steps in case the case came before Parliament. Every League member had to agree to undertake her work with every care for her own health and that of her neighbours so that no one would have any excuse to interfere with her work.

Gertrude Tuckwell Collection, Reel 4, File 202

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89. *The Lancet*, 15th February 1908, p.515

90. During 1908 there were at least three sweating exhibitions organised under the aegis of the N.A.S.L.: in Woolwich in February; in Bristol in March and in Ilford in May. *The Morning Post*, 28th February; *The Bristol Echo*, 10th March and *The Essex Times*, 31st May

Gertrude Tuckwell Collections, Reel 5, File 217

91. Ibid, Reel 6, File 224

92. *The Lancet*, 19th December 1908, pp.1826-8

Another conference on infant mortality was held in 1908, a follow-up to that held in 1906. All sections of the Press wrote about it and the medical press devoted many column inches to its proceedings and conclusions.

Report of the National Conference on Infantile Mortality, March 1908, pp.1-36

The *British Medical Journal* in January, March and August. *The East London Observer* reported that at a lecture organised by the Stepney Council of Public Welfare in Whitechapel it was stated that Stepney mothers were 'as good and as true mothers... as in any other part of the country; but over-drinking, overworking and ignorance tend in certain areas to maternal neglect. Wage earning mothers, whether they worked at home or away from home could not be the mothers of healthy families'.

*East London Observer*, 18th April 1908. p.2

In July 1908 the Mayoress who opened the Spitalfields Flower and Baby Show declared that: 'she could think of nothing better than to cultivate in the human mind the love of flowers and the sacred duties of motherhood'.

*East London Observer*, 11th July 1908. p.3

93. As early as 1889 Margaret Harkness drew attention to the connection between low pay, sweated labour and prostitution:
There among the gloomy alleys Progress halts in palsied feet;
Crime and hunger casts our maidens by the thousands on the street;
There the Master scrimps his haggard sempstress of her daily bread;
There a single sordid attic holds the living and dead.

Quoted in W.J. Fishman, op cit, p.115
For a detailed analysis of nineteenth century East End prostitution see J. Walkowitz, Prostitution and Victorian Society, 1986, p.7

94. Five Points in the Relation between Votes for Women and Certain Economic and Social Facts, National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, 1909, p.3

95. Ibid, pp.3-5

96. Women's Social and Political Union handbill, 'The Labour of Married Women: A Working Woman's Reply to Mr John Burns, 1907, p.1

97. Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence (1867-1954), suffragette and social reformer. She and her barrister husband were the joint editors of the W.S.P.U.'s weekly newspaper Votes For Women. She was imprisoned four times in 1906 for her involvement in suffragette demonstrations and in 1908 led a band of women who chained themselves to the railings at 10 Downing Street. Europa Biographical Dictionary of British Women, op cit, pp.324-5

98. Votes For Women, 20th August 1908, pp.388-9

99. Charlotte Despard, Woman's Franchise and Industry, c.1909, p.3


101. Ibid, p.556

102. S. Boston, op cit, pp.660-65
S. Lewenhak, op cit, p.116
T. Olcott, op cit, pp.46-7

103. W.T.U.L., 32nd Annual Report, 1907, pp.3-5

104. Ibid, pp.12-14

105. M.A. Hamilton, Mary MacArthur, A Biographical Sketch, 1925, p.56

Gertrude Tuckwell's essay 'The Regulation of Women's Wages' made a cogent case for Wages Boards. Motherhood was an important element in her thesis.
See D. Shackleton (Ed), Women in Industry from Seven Points of View, 1908, pp.18-22
Mary MacArthur explained the difficulties of organising women into trade unions and emphasised the importance of the group she had founded in 1906, The National Federation of Women Workers. She also used the vocabulary of Motherhood, Race and Empire. Women trade unionists were being educated to become better citizens, she declared, so that they could 'undertake its [society's] responsibilities and were more fitted physically and mentally to be the mothers of the coming race'.

D. Shackleton, op cit, pp.65-83
See also C. Black's essay in Shackleton's book. Legislative proposals perpetuated the view that homeworkers were negligent: 'The time that ought to go to scrubbing and sweeping cannot be afforded. Her children are neglected; she is so busy earning a few pence for them that she has no leisure to look after them.' She had found London homeworkers to be 'industrious, well conducted, well-meaning and well mannered'.
D. Shackleton, op cit, pp.186-8
See also Constance Smith's essay in Shackleton's book, pp.31-59
She was a keen advocate of Wages Boards.
C. Collette, op cit, p.66

113. Europa, op cit, pp.48-9

114. Ibid, pp.267-8 and J. Ramsay MacDonald, Margaret MacDonald, 1920, pp.78-192

115. Europa, op cit, p.265


117. Ibid, pp.250-1

118. C. Collette, op cit, p.8

119. Ibid, pp.118-9

120. E. Mappen, op cit, pp.235-53
REFERENCES – CHAPTER 5

GOVERNMENT AND SWEATED LABOUR: THE 1909 ACT

1. Cab.37/97, piece 13
3. Trade Boards Act, 1909, 3 Edw 7, Chap.22, Section 1, p.91
4. J. Schmiechen, op cit, p.174
5. S. Pennington and B. Westover, op cit, pp.10-11
6. Winston Churchill, Liberal MP for Manchester N.W. from 1906, then MP for Dundee from mid-1908. He had been the Conservative MP for Oldham from 1900. His first post with the Liberal Government was Under-Secretary for the Colonies. In April 1908 he was appointed President of the Board of Trade. His interest in and commitment to social reform are evidenced in his speeches from 1907 onwards. He had a genuine sympathy for the poor. Paul Addison believes the driving force in his life was undisguised ambition, that he was a careerist who wanted to make history. His views on social reform were characterised by a blend of authentic paternalism and political self-interest. With Asquith as Prime Minister and David Lloyd George as Chancellor of the Exchequer, the socio-economic political conditions were near perfect for Churchill's first steps towards social policy making.

P. Thane, Foundations of the Welfare State, op cit, p.81

Winston Churchill's private and political papers at Churchill College, Cambridge yielded important personal and political insights into this period of his career which have informed the author's writings. The papers of David Lloyd George, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach and A.J. Mundella, the latter two were both at the Board of Trade, were interesting but did not materially add to the picture.

7. Sir Hubert Llywellyn Smith was an outstanding civil servant and administrator. A Quaker with a double first from Balliol, he had been a University Settlement worker at Toynbee Hall in Whitechapel.

Paul Addison, op cit, p.72

9. Ibid, pp.860-861
10. Ibid, pp.861-862
11. Ibid, pp.862-863
12. Trade Boards Act, op cit, Sections 2 and 3, p.92
13. Ibid, Section 4, pp.92-93
14. Ibid, Sections 9-12, pp.96-97
15. Ibid, Sections 13 and 14, p.98
16. Ibid, Section 15, pp.98-99
17. Ibid, Sections 16 and 17, p.99
18. Ibid, Section 6, p.94
20. Cab.37/97, piece 13, pp.1-4
21. Cab.37/97, piece 42, p.1
22. Ibid, pp.1-2
23. The Liverpool Post, 10th February 1909, Gertrude Tuckwell Collection, Reel 4, File 200
27. J.W. Hills, Unionist MP for Durham since 1906
    Dod's, 1908, op cit, p.277
28. Cab.37/98, piece 42, p.2
30. Sir F. Banbury, Dod's, 1908 op cit, p.209
32. Ibid, 26th March 1909, Cols.2061-2
   Ibid, Cols.2077-8
Sir F. Banbury opposed the Sweated Industries Bill for the same reasons as he opposed the Trade Boards Bill - because he felt they were 'Socialistic measures'. He insisted that the oldest and slowest homeworkers were bound to suffer if minimum wages were introduced: 'It is not possible that the employer could pay them a higher rate of wages unless they could produce a larger amount of work. The consequence will be that the employer will only employ those who can work quickly.'

Ibid, Cols.2091-2

Towards the end of the debate Sir Thomas Whittaker, the Liberal MP for the Spen Valley in Yorkshire, and Chairman of the recent Commons Committee on Homework, spoke in favour of minimum wages, although with some reservations. He viewed the proposed measures as an 'important new departure' dealing with 'a considerable difficulty'. He declared himself to be:

concerned very much with the condition of the homeworkers in this country and that any trade which could not afford to pay its workers a minimum wage which would enable people to live up to such a [minimum] standard... is a trade which ought not to be permitted in this country. I am prepared to say that it ought to die out and that the nation should take upon itself the responsibility of maintaining the people thrown out in that way if they are unable to get employment in other directions.

Ibid, Cols.2112-21 and Col.2129

Mr H.J. Tennant, Liberal MP for Berwickshire since 1894. He had been Assistant Private Secretary to H.H. Asquith when he was Home Secretary, was Secretary of the Home Office inquiry into various lead industries, Chairman to a Departmental Committee on Miscellaneous Dangerous Trades, was in favour of Free Trade, licensing reform and social and industrial reforms.

Dod's, 1909, op cit, p.354

Sir William Bull had been a member of the Commons Select Committee on Homework.

Dod's Parliamentary Companion, 1910, p.234

Mr E. Parkes, Dod's, 1909, op cit, p.321
44. **Hansard**, House of Commons Debates, 28th April, op cit, Cols.372-7

45. Ibid, Cols.385-90

46. Ibid, Col.393

47. Ibid, Col.411


50. **Hansard**, House of Commons Debates, 28th April, op cit, Cols.429-81


52. Ibid, Col.978-87

53. Ibid, Col.989

54. Ibid, Cols.993-5

   Ibid, 16th September 1909, Vol.2, Cols.1234-41
   Ibid, 20th September 1909, Vol.3, Col.18

56. **Hansard**, House of Lords Debates, 7th October 1909, Vol.11, Col.2336

57. Ibid, 20th October 1909, Vol.14, Col.97

58. **Hansard**, House of Commons Debates, 28th April, op cit, Cols.342-411

59. Ibid, Cols.351-403

60. Harry Marks, *Dod's Parliamentary Companion*, 1896, p.306 and *Dod's 1909*, op cit, p.304
   **Hansard**, 28th April, op cit, Cols.359-360


62. **Hansard**, House of Lords Debates, 30th August, op cit, Col.1009

63. Gertrude Tuckwell Collection, Reel 6, File 225

64. Ibid, Reel 4, File 200 I and II and Reel 6, File 225


67. J. Schmiechen, op cit, p.171
68. Gertrude Tuckwell Collection, Reel 4, File 200 I
69. Ibid, Reel 4, File 200 II
70. Ibid, Reel 4, File 200 I
71. Ibid, Reel 6, File 224
72. J. J. Mallon (1875-1961), a social worker in the North of England. In 1906 he became Secretary of the N.A.S.L. He would become closely involved with the work of Toynbee Hall and was its Warden from 1919 to 1954. Was a member of thirteen of the Trade Boards set up after the 1909 Act and was Honorary Secretary of the Trade Board Advisory Council. He married the daughter of A. G. Gardiner, the Editor of The Daily News. Dictionary of National Biography, 1961-70. pp. 717-8
74. Ibid, p. 5
J. Morris has a different view of the political situation at this time. She contends that the N.A.S.L., although welcoming the fact that the Government was taking the issue seriously, did not like the permissive nature of Churchill's bill. Their Bill, introduced by the Conservative MP, Mr J. Hill, was not withdrawn quite as gracefully as the League's report suggests. Even though he had the support of the Social Imperialists of his own party it was 'talked out'.
J. Morris, op cit, p. 210
75. East London Observer, 29th May 1909. p. 5
76. Ibid, 10th July 1909, p. 6
77. Ibid, 7th August 1909, p. 2
78. W.T.U.L. 35th Annual Report, 1910, pp. 3-12
79. The Woman Worker. 2nd June 1909, p. 500
80. Ibid, 15th December 1909, p. 542
Gertrude Tuckwell Collection, Reel 8. File 357
82. The Case For and Against a Legal Minimum Wage for Sweated Industries, 1909, pp. 1-24
83. C. Meyer and C. Black, Makers of Our Clothes - A Case for Trade Boards: Being the Results of a Year's Investigation into the Work of Women in London in the Tailoring, Dressmaking and Underclothing Trades, 1909, p. 16
84. C. Black, Married Women's Work, 1915
85. J. Schmiechen, op cit, pp. 173-4
86. J. Morris, op cit, p.111
R.H. Tawney had been an Oxford graduate resident at Toynbee Hall just after the turn of the century, and in 1903 had been on 'the committee of the unemployed' which was chaired by William Beveridge. His studies on the effects of the Trade Boards Act were conducted under the aegis of the economic organisation, The Ratan Tata Foundation.
J. Harris, Unemployment and Politics, op cit, p.151

87. S. Pennington and B. Westover, op cit, pp.109-110

88. J. Schmiechen, op cit, p.174

89. Ibid, p.177

90. S. Pennington and B. Westover, op cit, pp.110-111

91. J. Schmiechen. op cit. pp.178-9
CONCLUSIONS: THE BATTLE FOR 'PIN MONEY'

   The Diary of Beatrice Webb, Vol.3, op cit, p.384

2. G. Haw, *From Workhouse to Westminster: The Life Story of Will Crooks, MP*, 1917, pp.3-6


   The oral testimony gathered by the author shares some of the memories of the children of homeworking mothers cited above. Mr Alexander Gander, formerly of Whitechapel, was interviewed in May 1989. His mother and aunts made boxes and match-boxes. The evidence he presented was similar to the testimony of Will Crooks.
   Miss Deborah Cohen who was interviewed in July 1989, lived in Spitalfields. She remembered her mother working at home finishing trousers just before the First World War. She and her siblings were often required to collect work from a local middleman and return it when completed in an old pram.


   E. Jordan, 'The Exclusion of Women from Industry in Nineteenth Century Britain', op cit, pp.290-291
   J. Lewis and C. Davies, 'Protective Legislation in Britain, 1870-1990; equality, difference and their implications for women's work' op cit, p.14 and pp.16-18
   S. Rose, *Limited Livelihoods*, op cit, pp.80-88

- 314 -
9. J. Harris, 'Economic Knowledge and British Social Policy', op cit, pp.387-390

10. J. Schmiechen, op cit, pp.173-174

11. P. Thane, Government and Society, op cit, pp.51-53


13. Ibid, pp.61-81


15. P. Thane, Foundations of the Welfare State, op cit, pp.74-81

For international comparisons, see P. Thane, Foundations of the Welfare State, op cit, pp.101-123

On the power of the Press: 'Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets', Napoleon Bonaparte, The International Thesaurus of Quotations, 1970, p.264

'We live under a government of men and morning newspapers', Wendell Phillips, The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, 1979, p.733

'The Times has made many ministries', Walter Bagehot, The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, ibid, p.28

16. S. Pennington and B. Westover, op cit, p.2

17. J. Morris, op cit, p.232

G. Alderman argues that the Trade Boards Act was good for Jewish trade unions in that it encouraged small unions to amalgamate.

G. Alderman, Modern British Jewry, op cit, p.187

18. S. Pennington and B. Westover, op cit, pp.132-147

19. Ibid, pp.132-147

20. Report of the National Homeworking Unit, April 1988 to October 1989, p.4

21. Interview with Mr Mulcahy, Health and Community Services Officer, Bethnal Green Neighbourhood, London E2, December 1991

22. S. Pennington and B. Westover, op cit, pp.156-157
A BRIEF HISTORY OF SPITALFIELDS

Spitalfields has been a homogeneous working community for more than three centuries. The area became an important cloth working centre and from the middle of the seventeenth century brick-making and brewing industries flourished.\textsuperscript{(1)} The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685\textsuperscript{(2)} caused thousands of Huguenots to flee from religious persecution. Forty to fifty thousand came to Britain, those who settled in London chose Wandsworth, Soho and Spitalfields.\textsuperscript{(3)}

The Spitalfields silk industry experienced extremes of prosperity and poverty, quickly affected by changing fashion tastes, and the dislocation to business caused by war. In the 1780s there were between twelve and fifteen thousand working looms, employing nearly forty thousand operatives.\textsuperscript{(4)} The area deteriorated further when more streets and courts were built to provide extra working and living space for weavers and the ancillary trades.

The common lodging houses which dominated certain parts of Spitalfields gave it an unsavoury reputation. Its name was a byword for poverty, disease and lawlessness. The decline accelerated during the early nineteenth century, when more 'jerry-built' houses appeared. Silk-weaving was the staple industry in 1831, directly supporting fifty thousand workers, and almost as many again indirectly.\textsuperscript{(5)}
Commercial Street, a new road to link the docks with other parts of London, was planned in the 1830s and completed during the next twenty years. As well as improving access and easing traffic congestion, it cut a swathe through Spitalfields' rookeries. The terms 'slums' and 'rookeries' were new words in the English language and date from this period - slum: 'a street, alley, court situated in a crowded district of a town or city inhabited by people of low class or by the very poor; a number of these streets or courts forming a thickly populated neighbourhood or district of a squalid or wretched character'; rookery: 'a cluster of mean tenements densely populated by people of the lowest class'.

John Hollingshead, a journalist, wrote on 'Ragged London' in 1861, describing a walk through Spitalfields:

"Taking a broad road from Aldgate church to old Whitechapel... you may pass on either side about twenty narrow avenues leading to thousands of closely packed nests full to overflowing with misery and rags. Many living signs of the inner life behind the busy shops are always oozing out onto the pavements and into the gutters."

Silk-weaving went into an irreversible decline in the 1860s. All branches of the industry suffered, from the merchants and master-weavers down to the piece-work weavers and those employed in the ancillary trades. By 1880, the area was densely overcrowded and insanitary. It was cosmopolitan - the large Irish population, well established by the 1860s, was steadily being added to in the 1870s by a stream of migrants from the rest of the United Kingdom coming to London in search of work. There was also a well-established Jewish community. At the beginning of the nineteenth century Houndsditch had been the main Jewish quarter of London and by the late 1870s Whitechapel and Spitalfields had Dutch Jews working in the cigar and tobacco trade; Russian and Polish Jews in the garment, boot and shoe-
making and in fur, and Austrian and German Jews in the hat and cap-making, boot and shoe, furniture and clothing industries. Their numbers were boosted by an influx of refugees from Russia and Poland escaping the pogroms which followed the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in March 1881.

There is a wealth of contemporary detailed description. However, the Victorian middle-classes were largely ignorant of the realities of working-class life and often what they did know was tempered with a fear of people they thought to be different from themselves. The fiercest critics were often of a religious and temperance disposition. By the 1880s there was a growing body of literature and social reportage about the life and habitat of the residents of Spitalfields.

In 1845 Friedrich Engels described a wretchedly poor Spitalfields family in The Condition of the Working Class in England.\(^9\) In The Rookeries of London\(^9\) (1850) Thomas Beames, a preacher and assistant at St James, Westminster, gave a view based on visits to, and hearsay about, the capital's slums, including Spitalfields: 'Rookeries hide the listlessness of departed hope and the indolence of broken hearts... We fear them for what they are, beds of pestilence, where the fever is generated which shall be propagated to distant parts of the town.'\(^10\) Henry Mayhew's descriptions were more empathetic than his peers and successors.\(^11\) In 1873 when Canon Samuel Barnett and his wife visited their new parish, allegedly the worst in London, she recalled that: 'The people were dirty and bedraggled, the children neglected, the streets littered and ill kept, the beer shops full, the schools shut up.'\(^12\)

The annual reports made by Spitalfields' own Medical Officer of Health are close observations of the housing and physical condition
of local people. It was a densely industrialised area of hundreds of small workshops or 'sweatshops', characterised by long hours, low pay and unhealthy conditions. The 'noxious' trades were carried on here, bone-boiling, glue-making, metal-refining and rag-sorting. For much of the nineteenth century local authorities rarely enforced the few public health regulations that did exist. It was not until the 1880s that public health legislation was refined and better enforced.\(^{(13)}\)

In Buck's Row, a housing and working area, was a bone-crushing and boiling business which had come to the attention of the local magistrate who demanded that: 'the bones be regularly removed once a week, (then) the neighbourhood will most probably be relieved from this disgusting and health-destroying nuisance'.\(^{(14)}\)

In the 1880s overcrowding in the East End of London was chronic. The magnetism of the capital caused its population to almost double between 1825 and 1851 and almost double again by 1900.\(^{(15)}\) During the nineteenth century London developed and expanded as the industrial and commercial capital of a worldwide Empire. Construction of the docks, the railways, government and commercial offices, warehouses, factories and workshops necessitated the clearing of vast working-class areas.\(^{(16)}\) Charlotte Court in Spitalfields was typical of the overcrowded conditions which were endemic:

> The court is 345 feet in length and 9 feet in width and contains forty-three houses, each having three rooms, and a wash-house... at number nine, where in a room measuring twelve feet by ten feet by seven there was a family of eight persons... and at number fifteen... in a room measuring ten feet by eight by seven, a family of five persons lived. \(^{(17)}\)

The quality of much of the housing stock in Spitalfields was poor:

There are very few... houses in this district... in which there is a sink... for carrying away any waste water. Some of the houses are three storeys in height... without any open space at the back, consequently they are without proper
Disease came with overcrowding, bad housing and insanitary conditions: 'It is generally admitted that the emanations from filth, in its various forms, are the chief cause of fever.' Spitalfields' high infant and child mortality rates were a major concern. Between September 1878 and January 1881, 1,003 infants (under twelve months) and 1,936 children under the age of five died in Spitalfields. Looked at more closely, these figures are even more revealing of this poverty-stricken area: in the quarterly report for July to October 1880, Dr Liddle reported that while 183 births were recorded in Spitalfields, 138 died before their first birthday. Their deaths represented 24.8% of the total mortality rate for Whitechapel, while in Spitalfields it represented 37.2%. Also, 247 children under the age of five died that same quarter. This was the historical context in which female homework was identified as a problem and defined as an issue in the mid 1880s. Perceptions about this area, the women, their homes and the work they did, and the threat they allegedly posed, informed every word produced about them.
REFERENCES: APPENDIX A


3. Ibid, p.111


5. Ibid, p.5


7. 'East London Papers', op cit, p.6


13. G. Stedman-Jones, op cit, p.26

14. Medical Officer of Health's Report for Whitechapel for the Quarter ending March 1867, p.6

15. Stedman-Jones, op cit, p.160

16. Ibid, pp.162-166 and p.170

17. Whitechapel Board of Works Eleventh Annual Report, Lady-Day 1866 to Lady-Day 1867, pp.6-7

18. Medical Officer of Health's Report for Whitechapel for the Quarter ending September 1879, p.10

19. Ibid, for the Quarter ending October 1880, p.8

20. Ibid, for the Quarter ending December 1878 to the Quarter ending July 1880, pp.1-2 in each report

21. Ibid, for the Quarter ending March 1879, pp.12-13
APPENDIX B

THE STREETS AND COURTS OF SPIRALFIELDS
VISITED BY THE CENSUS ENUMERATOR, 1881

Alexandra Buildings
Artillery Passage
Ann's Place
Barber Yard
Bell Lane
Bell Court
Bennett's Place
Brick Lane
Brushfield Street
Butler Street
Bull Court
Chapel Street
Church Street
Cobb's Yard
Coburg Court
Commercial Street
Corbett's Court
Cox's Square
Crispin Street
Crown Court
Dale's Place
Diamond Court
Diner's Buildings
Dorset Street
Emery's Court
Fashion Street
Fisher Alley
Flower and Dean Street

Montague Street
Nelson Court
New Court
New Square
Newman's Buildings
North Street
Palmer Street
Paradise Place
Poole's Court
Poole Square
Pope's Head Court
Princes Street
Quaker Street
Queen Street
Raven Row
Rosetta Court
Red Lion Court
Rose Lane
Rosemary Court
Shorter's Rents
Sandys Row
Spitalfields Market
Short Street
Shepherd's Place
Sugar Loaf Court
Tenter Street
Tenter Court
Tilly Street
Freeman Street
Frying Pan Alley
George Street
George Court
Great Pearl Street
Grey Eagle Street
Gregory's Court
Hanbury Street
Hope Street
Harriott's Place
Harrison's Court
John Street
Keate's Court
Lamb Street
Lardner's Buildings
Little Paternoster Row
Middlesex Street
Miller's Court
Thrawl Street
Tripe Yard
Tewson Court
Union Court
Union Place
Vine Court
Vine Yard
Wheeler Street
Wilke Court
Wilson's Place
Wood Street
Wentworth Street, East and West
Wentworth Street Dwellings
West Street
White Lion Street
White's Row

Source: Census Returns for Whitechapel, sub-district
Spitalfields, 1881, RG11 434 - RG11 438 inclusive
## APPENDIX C

### THE LIKELY PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN HOME INDUSTRIES IN SPITALFIELDS, 1881

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>NUMBERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Garment making</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milliners</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needlewomen</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waist-coat makers</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seamstresses</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladies underwear maker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Button-hole makers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay-makers</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silk jackets makers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirt-makers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costume-finisher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cap-makers</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collar-makers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collar-machinists</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dressmakers</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embroiderer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hatters</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machinists</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mantle-makers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presser</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailor's presser</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tie-makers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trouser-makers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailoresses</td>
<td>570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailor's machinists</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trimmers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trimmings-makers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td>965</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| <strong>Cigar making</strong>         |         |
| TOTAL:                   | 143     |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boot and shoe making</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boot-sewers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boot-riveter</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprentice boot worker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boot-closers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boot-machinists</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boot-binders</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boot-makers</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boot-finishers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slipper-makers</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoe-binder</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td><strong>65</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic work, mangling etc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(domestic servants not included)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washerwomen</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirt-ironers and washers</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manglers</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundresses</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td><strong>191</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box-making, books and stationery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book-gilders</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book-folders</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper-folder</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper-bag-makers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper-box-makers</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper-case-maker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper-colourer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valentine-card-maker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Envelope-folders</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td><strong>67</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silk-winders</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silk-weavers</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silk-jacket-weaver</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton and worsted-winders</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand textiles</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td><strong>64</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furrier</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fur skin-dressers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fur-sewers</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shape-wirers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furriers</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fur cap-makers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fur hands</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td><strong>46</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Furniture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chair-caners</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet-maker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chair-maker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upholsterers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse-hair-curler</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'Sweated' trades</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artificial flower-makers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bag-makers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basket-makers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brush-makers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feather dressers/curlers</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Homework'</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lint-maker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match-box-makers</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match-makers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattress case-maker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sack-makers</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tassel-makers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umbrella and parasol makers</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking stick-maker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willow-weaver</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toy-makers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td><strong>109</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Census Returns for Whitechapel, op cit*
## OCCUPATIONS OF THE MEN-FOLK OF SPITALFIELDS' HOMEWORKERS, 1881

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tailors</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machinists</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hat and cap-makers</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boot, shoe and slipper workers</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furriers</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silk-weavers</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigar-makers</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture and cabinet-makers</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General dealers</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish-mongers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green-grocers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lemon-sellers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ginger beer-maker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dock labourers</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General labourers</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car men</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish porters</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market porters</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porters</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew teachers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold beaters</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooper</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold beaters</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clock-maker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tinkers</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warehousemen</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenters</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painters</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper-hangers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rag-packers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builders</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawkers</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box-makers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sack-maker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brush-makers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messengers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivory turner</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diamond polisher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glass engraver</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Census Returns for Whitechapel, op cit*
## Appendix E

### Homework Done by Widows and Unmarried Women in Spitalfields, 1881

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Widows</th>
<th>Unmarried</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34 needlewomen</td>
<td>5 boot-makers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 tailoresses</td>
<td>7 cap-makers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 dressmakers</td>
<td>1 fur-sewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 laundresses</td>
<td>26 laundresses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 manglers</td>
<td>5 machinists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 paper box-makers</td>
<td>3 matchbox-makers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 sack-sewers</td>
<td>22 needlewomen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 cap-makers</td>
<td>11 seamstresses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 fur skin-dressers</td>
<td>45 tailoresses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 umbrella-makers</td>
<td>16 dressmakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 feather-dressers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 milliners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 shirt ironers/washers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 stay-makers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Census Returns for Whitechapel, op cit*
### APPENDIX F

**POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF THE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS COMMITTEE ON THE SWEATING SYSTEM, 1888-1890**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME &amp; YEAR OF BIRTH</th>
<th>POLITICAL PARTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lord Kenry, the Earl of Dunraven, 1841</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Chairman until 1890)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Archbishop of Canterbury</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earl of Derby, 1826</td>
<td>was Conservative, then Liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(becomes Chairman in 1890)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earl of Onslow, 1853</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viscount Gordon, the Earl of Aberdeen, 1847</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Clinton, 1834</td>
<td>Liberal Conservative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Clifford of Chudleigh, 1851</td>
<td>Liberal Unionist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Foxford, the Earl of Limerick, 1840</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Wigan, the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, 1847</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Sandhurst, 1855</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Rothschild, 1840</td>
<td>Liberal Unionist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lord Monkswell, 1845  
Liberal

Lord Thring, 1818  
Liberal

Earl of Wemyss, 1818  
Liberal Conservative

APPENDIX G

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON THE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS COMMITTEE ON THE SWEATING SYSTEM, 1888-1890

The Earl of Dunraven (Chairman), b. 1841, a Conservative; was the fourth Earl of Dunraven and Mount Earl in the peerage of Ireland. Born at Adare, County Limerick, educated in Rome and at Christchurch, Oxford. Joined the army in 1862 and saw 'The Battle of Hyde Park' on 23rd July 1866 when the mob tore down the railings as a protest against the Cabinet's decision to prohibit a meeting of The Reform League. In 1880 he published the first of many pamphlets on Irish affairs. In 1885-6 and 1886-7 he was the Under-Secretary for the Colonies, and then turned his attention to social questions. Greatly opposed the unrestricted immigration of pauper aliens in the 1880s. Appointed Chairman of the House of Lords Committee on The Sweating System in 1888 and maintained his interest in the subject during the next twenty years.


Times Obituary, 16th June 1926, p.11

Earl of Derby, b. 1826, previously a Conservative, in 1888 a Liberal. Became the Chairman of The Sweating System Committee in 1890 after Dunraven resigned. Had been Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Secretary of State for the Colonies, President of the Board of Control and Secretary of State for India, President of the Council and twice Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

Earl of Onslow, b. 1853, Conservative

Viscount Gordon, the Earl of Aberdeen, b. 1847, Liberal. Was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, January - June 1886.
Lord Clinton, b. 1834, a Liberal Conservative. Had been Under-Secretary for State for India, favoured 'progressive improvement'.

Lord Clifford of Chudleigh, b. 1851, Liberal Unionist.

Lord Foxford, the Earl of Limerick, b. 1840, Conservative.

Lord Wigan, the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, b. 1847, Conservative.

Lord Sandhurst, b. 1855, Liberal. Parliamentary Secretary to the War Office in 1886.

Lord Rothschild, b. 1840, Liberal Unionist, previously MP for Aylesbury.

Lord Monkswell, b. 1845, Liberal, barrister.

Lord Thring, b. 1818, Liberal. First class classical scholar, formerly Fellow of Magdalen College, barrister, had been Counsel to the Government.

Earl of Wemyss, b. 1818, a Liberal Conservative.

Source: Dod's Parliamentary Companion, 1890, pp.328-338
### Charles Booth's Survey of Spitalfields, 1889

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STREET</th>
<th>COLOUR</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION OF PEOPLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dorset St</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Class A, lowest class (loafers, semi-criminals)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flower &amp; Dean St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrawl St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grey Eagle St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Pearl St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope St</td>
<td>Dark Blue</td>
<td>Class B, very poor &amp; casual (workers in chronic want)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope Court</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osborne St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corbett's Court</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underwood St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angel Alley</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Montague St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Keate's St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underwood St</td>
<td>Pale Blue</td>
<td>Class C, poor (lived on 18-21 shillings a week)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albert St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finch St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STREET</td>
<td>COLOUR</td>
<td>DESCRIPTION OF PEOPLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Booth St</td>
<td>Purplish Grey</td>
<td>Class D, mixed (some poor &amp; others quite comfortable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanbury St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grey Eagle St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corbett's Court</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilkes St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Eagle St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White's Row</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Montague St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson Place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bell Lane</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frying Pan Alley</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Keate's St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princes' St</td>
<td>Pink</td>
<td>Classes E &amp; F (earnings of up to 30 shillings a week)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Lion St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freeman St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tilley St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osborne St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamb St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shepherd St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>Red &amp; Yellow</td>
<td>Classes G &amp; H (lower middle-class &amp; middle-class)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Charles Booth's Descriptive Map of Poverty, 1889*
### APPENDIX I

WOMEN'S WAGED WORK IN EAST LONDON, 1891

**FEMALES OVER TEN YEARS OF AGE IN HOME INDUSTRIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weavers</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hatters and hat manufacture</td>
<td>819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straw hat, plait and bonnet-makers</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailoresses</td>
<td>12,836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milliners, dress and stay-makers</td>
<td>9,015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shawl manufacturers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirt-makers and seamstresses</td>
<td>3,577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosiery manufacture</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosiers and haberdashers</td>
<td>1,398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glovers and glove-makers</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Button-makers</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoe, boot, patten and clog-makers</td>
<td>4,268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umbrella, parasol and stick-makers</td>
<td>759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trimmings-makers</td>
<td>1,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furriers and skinners</td>
<td>905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quill and feather dressers and dealers</td>
<td>763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willow-cane workers and basket-makers</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Envelope-makers</td>
<td>393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper-box and paper-bag-makers</td>
<td>3,577</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Returns, 1891, 1893-4, Vol.6, Table 7, pp.9-16
APPENDIX J

MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL OF THE DAILY NEWS' SWEATED INDUSTRIES EXHIBITION, 1906

President: Rev Professor George Adam Smith

Chairman of Executive Committee: A.G. Gardiner, Editor of The Daily News

Mr Percy Alden, MP
Mrs O.M. Aldridge
Mr G.N. Barnes, MP
Miss Clementina Black
Mr R. Blatchford
Mr H. Burrows
Mr G. Cadbury
Mr E. Cadbury
Dr J. Clifford
Miss Minnie Cochrane
Mr A.E. Copping
Mr W. Crooks, MP
Mrs Despard
Professor P. Geddes
Mr G.P. Gooch, MP
Rev G. Hanson
Mr J. Keir Hardie, MP
Mr G. Haw
Mrs Amie Hicks
Mr J.A. Hobson
Mr T. Holmes
Mrs H. Price Hughes
Miss Irwin
Mr Rev Scott Lidgett
Rev A. L. Lilley
Miss M. MacArthur
Mrs Ramsay MacDonald
Mr C.F.G. Masterman, MP
Rev H.T. Meakin
Mr L.G. Chiozza Money, MP
Miss Lily Montagu
Miss Mary Neal
Mr H. Quelch
Mr R.A. Roberts
Mr T.P. Ritzema
Rev Canon Scott Holland
Miss Seymour
Mr G. Bernard Shaw
Rev J.H. Shakespeare
Mr G. Shann
Mr A. Sherwell
Professor W. Smart
Mr H.W. Smith
Mr A.L. Smith
The Lady Henry Somerset
Mr H.G. Wells

- 336 -
Rev T. Jackson  Rev H. Russell Wakefield
Mr G. Lansbury  Rev J.E. Watts Ditchfield
Mrs E. Pethick Lawrence  Mr P.W. Wilson, MP

Organising Secretary:  Mr R. Mudie-Smith

Source:  The Daily News' Sweated Industries Exhibition Catalogue, 1906, p.4
### DETAILS OF HOURS AND EARNINGS OF TYPICAL SPITALFIELDS HOME INDUSTRIES AT THE DAILY NEWS' SWEATED INDUSTRIES EXHIBITION, 1906

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESCRIPTION OF WORK</th>
<th>RATES PAID</th>
<th>AVERAGE LENGTH OF DAY (HOURS)</th>
<th>AVERAGE DAILY WAGE</th>
<th>PER WEEK</th>
<th>REMARKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>artificial flowers</td>
<td>2½d per dozen</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9/6d</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cigars</td>
<td>1/4d per 100</td>
<td>10½</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9/-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>button boot uppers</td>
<td>2/- per dozen</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14/-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>matchboxes</td>
<td>2d per gross</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6/6d</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feather work</td>
<td>2½d per gross</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>feathers supplied in bulk need picking &amp; curling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper bags</td>
<td>6d per thousand</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5/6d</td>
<td>takes 3 hours to make 1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible folding</td>
<td>1d &amp; 1½d per thousand sheets</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9-10/-</td>
<td>worker broken down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tooth brushes</td>
<td>4/- per gross</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>can do 4 an hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feather stripping for quill pens</td>
<td>6d per thousand</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9/-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ladies blouses</td>
<td>2½d each</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>provides own cotton, heat &amp; machine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ladies skirts</td>
<td>4½d each</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>button holes</td>
<td>1/6 per gross</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4/6d</td>
<td>regular work, rent 2/9d for one room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children's boots</td>
<td>1/6d per dozen</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6/6d</td>
<td>provides own thread</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Daily News' Catalogue, op cit, pp.146-156
### APPENDIX L

**POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF THE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS SELECT COMMITTEE ON HOMEWORK, 1907-1908**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEMBER</th>
<th>CONSTITUENCY &amp; WHEN ELECTED</th>
<th>PARTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sir T.P. Whittaker</td>
<td>Spen Valley, 1892</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Chairman)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.S. Arkwright</td>
<td>Hereford, 1900</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.C. Bridgeman</td>
<td>Oswestry, Shropshire, 1906</td>
<td>Unionist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir W. Bull</td>
<td>Hammersmith, 1900</td>
<td>Unionist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.P. Boland</td>
<td>Kerry South, 1900</td>
<td>Nationalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.F. Brunner</td>
<td>Leigh, Lancs, 1906</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.G. Chiozza Money</td>
<td>Paddington N, 1906</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Devlin</td>
<td>Belfast W, 1906</td>
<td>Nationalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.R. Dewar</td>
<td>St George in the East, 1901</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Fell</td>
<td>Great Yarmouth, 1906</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.P. Gooch</td>
<td>Bath, 1906</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Henderson</td>
<td>Barnard Castle, Durham, 1903</td>
<td>Labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Lamb</td>
<td>Rochester, 1906</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.A. Law</td>
<td>Donegal W, 1902</td>
<td>Nationalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Massie</td>
<td>Wiltshire N, 1906</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.F.G. Masterman</td>
<td>East Ham N, 1906</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Parkes</td>
<td>Birmingham Central, 1895</td>
<td>Liberal Unionist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Richardson</td>
<td>Nottingham S, 1906</td>
<td>Labour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 339 -
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEMBER</th>
<th>CONSTITUENCY &amp; WHEN ELECTED</th>
<th>PARTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C. Robinson</td>
<td>Brecknockshire, 1906</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.M. Samuel</td>
<td>Whitechapel, Tower Hamlets, 1904</td>
<td>Radical/Liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.J. Sherwell</td>
<td>Huddersfield, 1906</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.P. Trevelyan</td>
<td>Elland, N Yorks, 1899</td>
<td>Lib/Imperialist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: House of Commons Select Committee on Homework, 1907, Vol.6, p.(ii)

House of Commons Select Committee on Homework, 1908, Vol.8, p.(ii)
APPENDIX M

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON THE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS SELECT COMMITTEE ON HOMEWORK, 1907-8

Sir T.P. Whittaker (Chairman), b. 1850. Liberal MP for Spen Valley, Yorkshire, and Chairman and Managing Director of the Life Assurance Institution. Member of the Royal Commission on Licensing Laws, also in the newspaper trade, knighted in 1906, a member of the Scarborough Corporation and the author of a number of articles on social and economic questions.

Dod's Parliamentary Companion, 1908, pp. 365-6

J.S. Arkwright, b. 1872, Conservative MP for Hereford since 1900. Educated at Eton and Christchurch, Oxford. A practising barrister who had been Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Rt Hon A.J. Balfour. Was a JP and Deputy Lieutenant for Herefordshire.

Ibid, p. 205

W.C. Bridgeman, b. 1864, Unionist MP for Oswestry, Shropshire since 1906, educated at Eton and Trinity, Cambridge. Member of the London School Board 1897-1904, and on the London County Council since 1904, was Asst Private Secretary to Lord Knutsford at the Colonial Office 1889-1892. Unsuccessful at N. Worcestershire in 1892, Mid-Derbyshire in 1895 and at Oswestry in 1904.

Ibid, p. 232

J.P. Boland, b. 1870, Nationalist MP for Kerry South since 1900. His father was a baker and miller in Dublin, a graduate and barrister at the Inner Temple.

Ibid, p. 217
J.F. Brunner, b. 1865, Liberal MP for Leigh, S. Lancashire since 1906. His father was Sir John Brunner, MP and business magnate. Lost at Hyde in 1900.
Ibid, p.221

Sir William Bull, b. 1863, Unionist MP for Hammersmith since 1900. A solicitor, and head of the family firm, Governor of the Latymer Charities, Trustee of the Royal Humane Society, Hon Sec of the London Unionists, member of the London County Council 1892-1901, was a member of the Alien Immigration Committee, and was knighted in 1905.
Ibid, p.234

L.G. Chiozza Money, b. 1870, Liberal MP for Paddington N. since 1906. Was listed as a Liberal and a Collectivist. (The 'Money' part of his name was added in 1903). An author and leading contributor to the major newspapers and journals.
Ibid, 1908, p.308

J. Devlin, b. 1872, Nationalist MP for West Belfast since 1906 and General Secretary of the Irish League of Great Britain and MP for Kilkenny 1902-1905.
Ibid, 1908, p.244

T.R. Dewar, b. 1864, Conservative MP for St George in the East, Tower Hamlets since 1901. His family were whisky distillers. He was JP for the county of Kent and member of the London County Council for Marylebone 1892-1895. Sheriff of the City of London 1897-8, in favour of better housing for the working-classes, and opposed unrestricted immigration of pauper aliens.
Ibid, p.23

A. Fell, b. 1850, Conservative MP for Great Yarmouth since 1906, was a solicitor practising in the City of London. Author of The Fallacies of Free Trade, a keen Tariff Reformer and a Protectionist.
Ibid, p.254

G.P. Gooch, b. 1873, Liberal MP for Bath since 1906. Educated at Trinity, Cambridge, an author and lecturer. Private Secretary to the
Rt Hon J. Bryce when he was Chief Secretary for Ireland. Author of *The Heart of Empire.*
Ibid, p.262

A. Henderson, b. 1863 in Glasgow, Labour MP for Barnard Castle, Durham since 1903. Held several prominent trade union positions, Secretary of the N.E. Coast Conciliation Board since 1894, member of Newcastle City Council, Durham County Council and Darlington Borough Council, and was Whip to the Labour Party.
Ibid, p.275

E. Lamb, b. 1876, Liberal MP for Rochester since 1906. Educated at Dulwich and Wycliffe Colleges, an electrical engineer. Chairman of New System Private Telephone Company, member of the Common Council of the City of London since 1903, Vice President of the Home Counties Liberal Federation and the Land Nationalisation Society.
Ibid, p.316

H.A. Law, b. 1872, Nationalist MP for Donegal West since 1902. His father had been the Lord Chancellor of Ireland, educated at Rugby and University College, Oxford.
Ibid, p.291

J. Massie, b. 1842, Liberal MP for Wiltshire N. since 1906, Councillor and Alderman of Leamington 1878-87, Assistant Commissioner to the Royal Commission on Secondary Education 1894, and Treasurer to the National Liberal Federation 1903-6.
Ibid, p.305

C.F.G. Masterman, b. 1873, Liberal MP for West Ham N. since 1906. Educated at Christ's College, Cambridge, a journalist and author. Secretary of the Children's Country Holiday Fund, a University Extension Lecturer and Poor Law Guardian for Camberwell. Unsuccessful at Dulwich in 1903.
Ibid, p.305

E. Parkes, b. 1848, Liberal Unionist MP for Birmingham Central since 1895. An iron-master and JP for Birmingham, member of the City
Council and formerly Chairman of the local Liberal Unionist Association.  
Ibid, p.321

A. Richardson, b. 1860, Labour MP for Nottingham S. since 1906. Educated at a National school and Newark Grammar School, an apprenticed grocer and (in 1908) a business man and JP for Nottinghamshire.  
Ibid, p.332

C. Robinson, b. 1863, Liberal MP for Brecknockshire in Wales since 1906. JP for Glamorgan.  
Ibid, p.334

S.M. Samuel, b. 1856, Radical MP for Whitechapel since 1904. Father was a banker, and he was a banker himself and JP for the City of London.  
Ibid, p.346

A.J. Sherwell, b. 1863, Liberal MP for Huddersfield since 1906, an author and journalist. His book Life in West London described sweated labour in the West End garment industry. Also wrote several economic pamphlets and The Temperance Problem and Social Reform.  
Ibid, p.343

C.P. Trevelyan, b. 1870, the Liberal Imperialist and Social Reform MP for Elland, W. Yorkshire since 1899. His father had been a Cabinet Minister, was a member of the London School Board 1896-7, a Charity Commissioner in 1906 and unsuccessful at N. Lambeth in 1895. Keen on land taxation, payment of MPs and popular control of education.  
Ibid, p.356
MEMBERSHIP OF THE NATIONAL ANTI-SWEATING LEAGUE
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President: Mr George Cadbury

Vice Presidents: Sir Charles Dilke, MP
Lord Dunraven
Rt Hon Herbert Gladstone, MP
Mr J. G. Gray
Mr Keir Hardie, MP
Canon Scott Holland
Dr Horton
Miss Margaret Irwin
Earl of Lytton
Rev J. Scott Lidgett
Mr William Maxwell
The Chief Rabbi
Mr W. Pember Reeves
Bishop of Ripon
Mr and Mrs Sidney Webb
Mr H. G. Wells
Mr H. Vivian, MP

Hon Treasurer: Earl Beauchamp

Hon Secretary: Mr George Shann

Executive Committee

Chairman: Mr A. G. Gardiner
Mr George Barnes, MP
Miss Clementina Black
Mr Herbert Burrows, MP
Mrs M. A. Gasson
Mrs Herbert Gladstone
Mr Thomas Holmes
Mr W. H. Lever, MP
Miss Mary MacArthur
Mr L. G. Chiozza Money, MP
Mrs W. Pember Reeves
Alderman William Saunders
Mrs Bernard Shaw
Mrs H. J. Tennant
Rev P. Thompson
Miss Gertrude Tuckwell
Rev W. Russell Wakefield

Source: National Anti-Sweating League papers, undated, Gertrude Tuckwell Collection
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Personal and political papers of Rt Hon A.J. Mundella, Sheffield University Archives

Personal papers of John Burns, Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman, Lady Dilke, Mary MacArthur, Clementina Black, J.J. Mallon, Department of Manuscripts, The British Library

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C. ORAL TESTIMONY

A number of interviews were conducted with residents and ex-residents of this part of East London who remember their mothers and female relatives doing homework and who helped with this kind of work themselves:

May 1989, Mr Alexander Gander, formerly of Whitechapel, now lives in Ruislip (his mother and aunts made boxes and matchboxes).

July 1989, Miss Deborah Cohen who still lives in Spitalfields (her mother was a trouser-finisher).

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