

In 1919, Averil Sanderson Furniss and Marion Phillips published *The Working Woman's House*, a short booklet liberally illustrated with plans and photographs, which offered a feminine perspective on contemporary debates about the physical form of post-war reconstruction. The introduction described two contradictory perceptions about the gendering of the home: a long-held belief that it was a 'woman's place' and the more recent masculine appropriation of domestic space summarised by Prime Minister Lloyd George's call for new houses 'fit for heroes to live in'.<sup>1</sup> In response, the authors suggested that post-war reconstruction offered an opportunity for these two positions to be combined. A woman, they declared, now wants her house to be fit for a hero to live in, but she also wants to free herself from some of that continuous toil which is the result of the bad housing conditions of the past, and has prevented her from taking her full share of work as a citizen, wife and mother.<sup>2</sup> Compared to earlier female housing campaigners such as Octavia Hill, Sanderson Furniss and Phillips spoke from a strong position.<sup>3</sup> After half a century of campaigns, in the closing months of the war the Representation of the People Act of February 1918 had made full citizens of those British women who were aged thirty or over (providing they met certain property qualifications or were university graduates) by granting them the parliamentary vote. Full political equality arrived a decade later with the Equal Franchise Act of 1928. Women were among several new categories of voter created by the 1918 Act which had established a mass electorate for the first time, but it was their presence that 'excited the most expectation and anxiety' among contemporary observers, despite their only partial inclusion in the electoral roll.<sup>4</sup> How women should be integrated into national political life and encouraged 'to take politics and citizenship seriously' became a matter of extensive public discussion.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, an equally prominent debate about the shape and scale of post-war reconstruction was raising political interest in the planning and design of the new working-class houses that the government was intending to build. The coincidence of these two concerns—what to do about new voters and how to improve working-class housing—encouraged those at the heart of post-war government to look to the home as a site the spatial configuration of which might be altered to promote the transformation of new women voters into active, responsible citizens, regardless of their previous relationship to politics.

For politically active women looking to connect with new voters, the home seemed an equally obvious starting point. Throughout the nineteenth century women had used their domestic knowledge to legitimise their participation in political campaigns. Working-class women invoked the rhetoric of 'militant domesticity' as Chartist activists.<sup>6</sup> Middle-class women held political meetings in their drawing rooms and were credited with the success of the consumer boycotts called by the anti-slavery movement.<sup>7</sup> The expansion of local government in the last quarter of the century had encouraged women's participation as elected officials in activities previously undertaken by private charities.<sup>8</sup> In the early twentieth century socialist women adopted a similar approach to engage working-class women in politics. Caroline Rowan's examination of the political priorities of the Women's Labour League (WLL) demonstrated how this group consistently used the home to reach women outside 'the normal channels of trade union activity'.<sup>9</sup> Karen Hunt's more detailed analysis of the League's relationship to domesticity showed how it positioned the home as 'the site of a woman-focussed politics' with the potential to connect women to mainstream politics, while at the same time broadening political boundaries to include their own immediate interests, thereby creating what she describes as 'a politics of the home'.<sup>10</sup> The implications of these connections for women as well as for politics have been explored in a number of studies of the inter-war period that focus particularly on the years after the Equal Franchise Act of 1928. Alison Light and Judy Giles have both pointed to the growing political significance of domesticity in this period. Giles found the post-war building of subsidised social housing to be a key factor in transforming the 'ordinary housewife' into a figure whose needs were now, if not met, then at least acknowledged by 'the media, by politicians and by the designers and producers of domestic technology'.<sup>11</sup> Her observation that working-class homes and housewives were 'increasingly claiming a place on the social and political agenda' between the wars builds on the work of Alison Light, whose study of middle-class femininity similarly explored how 'a new commercial culture of "home-making"' in the inter-war period 'put woman, and the home, and a whole panoply of connected issues, at the centre of national life'.<sup>12</sup> Research into the understanding of women's citizenship in the 1930s has suggested that a renewed interest in housing reform in that decade played an important role in 'creating better citizens' in Britain.<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth Darling has ascribed this concern to Britain's position as 'one of the few countries in Europe whose government

was untouched by extreme politics', a situation that fuelled anxiety concerning how best to preserve an engaged democracy among its population.<sup>14</sup> Darling argued that, although this applied to all new categories of voters, including working-class men as well as women, the earlier connections between women's domestic position and their politics helped to gender these debates; Catriona Beaumont has outlined the key role that voluntary women's associations played in 'gendering ... the campaign for better housing' in the 1930s.<sup>15</sup> The understanding of the home as an increasingly political space in that decade, and one on which women might legitimately claim to speak authoritatively, can also be traced in a number of feminist oral histories which similarly showed housing to have been an important issue in women's lives and often the basis on which they formulated political demands to local authorities.<sup>16</sup> This work adds much to our understanding of the links that emerged between domesticity and women's politics in the years following equal enfranchisement and their connections with continuing calls for housing reform. It says less, however, about the period of political transition immediately after the First World War, when these issues first combined.

This article investigates how the question of post-war housing design first came to be linked so closely to women's developing citizenship in 1920s Britain. Its principal focus is on the work of the Women's Housing Sub-Committee, an all-female body appointed by the Ministry of Reconstruction in 1918 to comment on plans for post-war working-class housing 'from a housewife's point of view'. The Sub-Committee's impact on the gendering of post-war reconstruction debates was recognised by feminist architectural historians in the 1980s: Alison Ravetz described its work as 'the most significant input of women into house design', while Barbara McFarlane argued that what she described as its 'feminist' approach might underpin contemporary attempts by 'women planners and architects' to consider how 'feminist ideas can influence the design of buildings and the urban environment'.<sup>17</sup> Yet their overviews of the Sub-Committee's work and priorities have made little impact on mainstream accounts of post-war housing.<sup>18</sup> Consequently its work and influence remains neglected in assessments of the relationship between women, domesticity and politics in the inter-war period, which concentrate on events after 1928.<sup>19</sup> Here, I attempt to redress this balance. Beginning with an overview of the Sub-Committee's membership and methodology I will then consider its approach to the configuration of three particular spaces in the post-war home: the kitchen/scullery, the

bathroom and the parlour. I will suggest that the Sub-Committee's ideas for the transformation of these three spaces anticipated what it saw as the opportunities presented by women's citizenship and attempted to change the working-class home from a site of domestic drudgery to one of empowerment where active and respectable female citizens could be produced, anticipating full political equality by a decade. Finally, through drawing on examples across a range of women's political organisations in the decade of transition between women's partial and full enfranchisement, I will show that the domestic interior continued to be recognised as a critical location for facilitating and engaging a more active model of citizenship amongst newly enfranchised women throughout the 1920s, by parties across all shades of political opinion, rather than just by women's groups or by those on the left, thereby paving the way for its re-emergence as a priority for women's organisations in the 1930s.

## I

The context for the establishment of the Women's Housing Sub-Committee was created in March 1916 when the Prime Minister, Asquith, set up a cabinet committee 'to deal with the general problems of Reconstruction'.<sup>20</sup> The following March, his successor, Lloyd George, replaced it with a more radical committee that included such well-known reformers as the progressive Liberal Seebohm Rowntree, the Fabian socialist Beatrice Webb and Dr Marion Phillips from the Women's Labour League. Some months later, in August 1917, a New Ministries Act enabled the establishment of a Ministry of Reconstruction with the Liberal (later Labour) MP Christopher Addison at its head.<sup>21</sup> Addison's biographers have described his Ministry, which operated until June 1919, as 'a laboratory of new ideas and social experiment'.<sup>22</sup> Initially concerned with the immediate demands of the war such as the food supply, it swiftly expanded the remit of what might constitute 'reconstruction' to include numerous health and welfare reforms, arguing for increased state intervention to create a better post-war society.<sup>23</sup> Its work was divided among a number of branches, led by co-opted sub-committees, each made up 'of experts on the subject'.<sup>24</sup> The question of what to do about new post-war housing, and particularly working-class housing, was considered by the first Reconstruction Committee, and continued to preoccupy its successors. Scarcity of labour and materials meant that house building had all but ceased during the war; a report that Rowntree produced for the second Reconstruction

Committee estimated that at least 300,000 new homes were required immediately.<sup>25</sup> How to provide and fund these was a key question for Addison's Ministry. Plans and illustrations of better housing offered a convenient visual metaphor for the new Britain which many hoped would emerge at the end of the conflict, 'moulding a better world out of the social and economic conditions which have come into being during the war', as the Cabinet put it.<sup>26</sup> On an individual level, each new house could stand as a tangible reward for its inhabitants' wartime sacrifice, as Walter Long of the Local Government Board recognised when he remarked that it would be 'criminal' to let soldiers return from 'water-logged trenches to something little better than a pigsty'.<sup>27</sup> Both of these viewpoints informed the famous slogan of the Coalition's 1918 election campaign that promised to replace pre-war 'slums' with 'homes fit for heroes'.<sup>28</sup>

There have been few studies of women's participation in national wartime government in comparison with those describing their involvement in munitions work or in the auxiliary sections of the armed forces, areas often considered to be related to the post-war enfranchisement of women.<sup>29</sup> Yet, the wartime expansion of the state combined with a shortage of (literal) manpower effected a dramatic rise in the numbers of women employed by the civil service: at the Treasury, for example, their numbers rose by 35% between 1914 and 1918.<sup>30</sup> The wartime ministries did not restrict these newly-recruited women to supportive roles. In the nineteenth century, the assumption of philanthropic activity by an expanding state had enabled women's participation by requiring locally-elected bodies to understand how best to feed and clothe the poor; now, the escalating scale of the war meant that policy makers operating at a national level needed an awareness of matters previously regarded as private domestic concerns.<sup>31</sup> Food shortages (including a lack of fats for soap) prompted first an austerity campaign and then rationing. These moves transformed individual decisions over how or what to cook or clean from questions of personal choice or necessity into ones of national importance, thus raising the status of women's knowledge. At the Ministry of Food, Mrs C.S. (Dorothy) Peel and Mrs Maud Pember Reeves were appointed as co-directors of women's service to act as a conduit between the nation's government and its women. Their combined expertise spread across social classes. Dorothy Peel, a journalist, was a familiar writer on domestic matters whose pre-war publications included a handbook that advised middle-class wives on how to keep house on a weekly budget of ten

shillings per head, while Maud Pember Reeves was best known for Round About a Pound a Week, her study of poverty and infant mortality in pre-war Lambeth undertaken for the Fabian Women's Group.<sup>32</sup> Together the women embarked on a fatiguing, nationwide programme of lecture tours and cookery classes, aimed at preserving household resources. This was more than a one-way transmission of knowledge, as Peel and Pember Reeves also reported to Whitehall on the views of their audiences on matters such as the difficulties that new Government-sponsored ingredients such as war flour, maize and cocoa butter caused the women who had to use them.<sup>33</sup>

State recognition of the relevance of women's knowledge to wartime efficiency encouraged ministers to involve them in the work of reconstruction. Addison placed women on a number of his Ministry's committees and advisory groups, including those dealing with domestic service, agriculture and women's employment.<sup>34</sup> He also appointed 'a small Women's Advisory Committee' to ensure that 'questions more particularly affecting women' received 'adequate consideration' as well as affording 'an opportunity ... of bringing the experience of women to bear on questions of general interest'.<sup>35</sup> Housing design was an obvious area where a female viewpoint might be required. The Women's Labour League initiated a campaign on this question in October 1917 led by Mrs Sanderson Furniss that linked up with other groups such as the Women's Co-Operative Guild to solicit working-class women's views on post-war housing.<sup>36</sup> Mrs Peel, whose pre-war writings had addressed this topic from the perspective of middle-class women coping with decreasing numbers of servants, had previously approached Sir Noel Kershaw, the assistant secretary to the Local Government Board, to ask him to put some women onto its Architects' Committee. His colleague, Mr Hare, declined the request as he preferred a separate advisory group, but the Ministry of Reconstruction took up the suggestion, acknowledging that there was a general feeling 'that women should be consulted about the construction of the new houses required after the war'.<sup>37</sup> A Women's Housing Sub-Committee was thus established in 1918 and held its first meeting on 15 February, nine days after the Representation of the People Bill passed into law.

Philip Abrams has claimed that, when choosing the Ministry's women advisors, Addison 'accepted marriage to men already prominent in government or business as the most appropriate qualification'.<sup>38</sup> Analysis of the Women's Housing Sub-Committee's membership, however, suggests that this was not so, and reveals

the extent to which government officials had become aware of the wide range of women's expertise to be found in the women's movement by the end of the war. In political terms, the Sub-Committee was made up of Liberal and Labour women. Although Elizabeth Darling described it as exemplifying 'the upper and ... middle-class women ... who invariably spoke for the needs of working-class women', analysis of its membership demonstrates that its class composition was in fact more mixed than this assessment suggests, and included a small number who could legitimately claim to speak as, and not just for, working-class women.<sup>39</sup> Its chair was Gertrude Emmott, a Liberal suffragist with a long-standing interest in women's housing, who also chaired the Ministry's more general Women's Advisory Committee.<sup>40</sup> Lady Emmott was joined over time by thirteen other women who brought with them an assortment of knowledge derived from their involvement in numerous organisations concerned with both women's issues (including party-political bodies) and with reshaping the domestic environment to promote social change. They were Eleanor Barton, a working-class woman from Manchester who was active in the Women's Co-Operative Guild; Sybella Branford, another women co-operator but from a rather different social background, who had been involved in planning Hampstead Garden Suburb and had expertise in the methodologies of regional surveys pioneered by Frédéric Le Play; Annette Churton, secretary of the Rural Housing and Sanitation Association; Dr Janet Lane-Clayton, a pioneering epidemiologist who was at that time head of the Household and Social Science Department of King's College for Women; Averil Sanderson Furniss from the Women's Labour League's own housing campaign; Gerda Guy, a Danish-born American suffragist and anthropologist with 'knowledge of labour saving devices in America', and Dorothy Peel.<sup>41</sup> Lane-Clayton resigned due to pressure of other work in April 1918, but new members were admitted: Maud M. Jeffrey, a member of the Executive Committee of the Association of Women House Property Managers, who had worked with Octavia Hill, and Women's Co-Operative Guild member and District Councillor Rosalind Moore. Mary D. Jones from the Welsh Town Planning and Housing Association, and Ethel Lloyd, the wife of Cardiff architect Thomas Alwyn Lloyd, who claimed particular knowledge of the problems of housing in Wales, were recruited in response to concerns that the overall profile was too English for a Sub-Committee investigating housing conditions in England and Wales (the Sub-Committee was not charged with

working in Scotland).<sup>42</sup> In July 1918 Addison agreed to Lady Emmott's request to approach 'two more Labour women', Alice Jarrett and Annie Foulkes Smith, as pressure of work prevented Eleanor Barton and Rosalind Moore from attending every meeting, at which point it was decided that the committee was large enough.<sup>43</sup>

The cross-class composition of the Sub-Committee was all the more relevant given that its task was to report on recent working-class housing provision. It was to do this through visiting 'the typical permanent houses being put up by the Ministry of Munitions' during the war as well as considering 'the question of conversion and adaption of middle-class dwellings for working-class tenants' to alleviate the anticipated post-war housing shortage.<sup>44</sup> In addition, the Sub-Committee was to comment on various plans for new working-class housing that were forwarded from the Ministry's own Architects' Committee. These included those in the Local Government Board's 1917 Design Manual for Municipal Councils and the prize-winning entries in a competition sponsored by the Local Government Board and the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1918.<sup>45</sup> In all of their investigations, the Sub-Committee was to comment 'with special reference to the convenience of the housewife', which in this instance meant the working-class women who would occupy the new or remodelled houses.<sup>46</sup> Although members were expected to serve 'in their individual capacity and not as representing any organisation', their pre-war experience and ongoing involvement in external groups concerned with Garden Cities, housing management and town planning shaped their approach to planning and design.<sup>47</sup> Their personal politics varied but their combined approach, described by McFarlane as comprising a feminism that 'bore the stamp of women in the labour movement', was heavily influenced by the recent investigations of the Women's Labour League in which several Sub-Committee members had been involved.<sup>48</sup> As we saw at the outset of this article, the League's own housing campaign, headed by a committee led by Mrs Sanderson Furniss, had published the leaflet, *The Working Woman's House*, in January 1918. Its text anticipated the coming franchise reform and built on the League's pre-war work that aimed to draw a direct connection between a woman's domestic surroundings and her new identity as a voter and a citizen, declaring that post-war reconstruction needed to devise ways in which the material environment could support this development: 'The working woman with a home of her own will be a voter. Let her first effort of citizenship be to improve

this home. She alone has the necessary knowledge and experience'.<sup>49</sup> It invited responses to eighteen questions about 'external planning and internal arrangements' which could provide a picture of the type of house that might free women from domestic drudgery and allow sufficient time for them to practise more active forms of citizenship. Twenty-five thousand copies were distributed or sold by June 1918 to trade unions, to branches of the Women's Co-Operative Guild and Women's Labour League and to schools for mothers as well as to individuals. Mrs Sanderson Furniss presented a compilation of the main findings from the first 5,000 responses to the Ministry's Women's Housing Sub-Committee.<sup>50</sup> A further 5,000 responses were received by the following year. Sanderson Furniss elaborated on their content in greater detail with Marion Phillips in *The Working Women's House* and other later single-authored publications in which she continued to link women's potential to become active citizens with their domestic surroundings.<sup>51</sup>

The simultaneous involvement of some of its members in the WLL housing campaign shaped the Women's Housing Sub-Committee's approach to its own work. Members concurred that their priority should be to allow working-class women to articulate their own demands, which the Sub-Committee would then bring to the notice of government. It set to work immediately and covered an impressive amount of ground, meeting forty-two times, almost weekly, between its inaugural meeting and its final one in January 1919. Its methodology was varied, aimed at drawing in as much information from as many individuals as possible, 'in order that ... conclusions may not be based on isolated statements from one or two women'.<sup>52</sup> Lady Emmott wrote to local newspapers throughout England and Wales explaining its remit, and requesting the help of local women's groups in compiling information about the preferences of women in their areas.<sup>53</sup> Respondents were encouraged to work with local branches of the Women's Labour League, the Women's Co-Operative Guild and 'other women's organisations' to achieve the widest possible response from working-class women, and to use meetings, lectures and conferences as the best way of obtaining 'the genuine and spontaneous views of the women themselves'.<sup>54</sup> Sub-Committee members travelled throughout England and Wales to inspect different housing schemes and elicit the opinions of women inhabitants. At least twenty houses of the same type would be inspected on each site, and every effort made to 'get the women to talk freely and to give their genuine views' without interference by

landlords or their representatives.<sup>55</sup> Women residents' views were sought on a range of issues classified as 'destructive (i.e. criticism of defects in existing housing)' and 'constructive, definite suggestions as to the ways in which these defects could be obviated'. There was also an effort to elicit any 'points women consider as essential or desirable in future house planning'.<sup>56</sup> In addition, the Sub-Committee sought the views of experts involved in the design and fitting-out of post-war social housing, and invited architects and manufacturers of domestic implements to speak at its meetings. This methodology, combined with the presence of some working-class women members on the Sub-Committee, produced an unparalleled record of working-class women's thoughts on housing design and layout in the immediate post-war era and of their domestic priorities, as well as pinpointing the main issues of conflict between the experts and reformers seeking to improve social housing and those who actually lived in the houses. The findings were summarised and compiled into two separate reports. The first, an interim report which was produced in April 1918, also commented on the prize-winning plans submitted to the Royal Institute of British Architects and Local Government Board competition for post-war housing design in 1917; the final report was presented in January 1919.<sup>57</sup> The interim report proved to be particularly controversial. It brought the Sub-Committee into conflict with the Local Government Board, which in turn rejected many of its findings on grounds of extravagance, although this did not deter the Sub-Committee from continuing to demand the improvements it believed to be essential if newly enfranchised women were to become fully functioning citizens. Women on the Sub-Committee were not only seeking to improve local environments in line with inhabitants' wishes. The Representation of the People Act had transformed Britain from a society where government was elected through a limited, property-based franchise to a mass democracy that demanded a much more active model of political participation.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, at this critical moment, Sub-Committee members recognised that there was a connection between the built environment in which working-class women's lives unfolded and their ability to develop interests beyond the confines of their homes. The potential of new housing to promote a model of active citizenship amongst new women voters thus formed an important dimension to the Sub-Committee's work, and anticipated some of the key demands of the women's movement in the 1930s.

The model of women's citizenship that Sub-Committee members

sought to produce through reshaping the domestic interior was informed by the developing ideas of the 'new' feminism which emerged during the First World War and characterised much feminist thought of the 1920s. Unlike feminists in the Edwardian militant suffrage movement who had fought for complete equality in all spheres of life, 'new feminists' emphasized sexual difference. Believing that women were equal to, but different from, men, they argued that the state should acknowledge this difference and offer special provision through protective legislation to enable women to overcome gendered disadvantages—hence its alternative title, 'welfare' feminism.<sup>59</sup> The Sub-Committee's approach chimed with that of new feminism. At no point did it challenge the prevailing view of housework as the preserve of women, or argue for men to take on more household chores.<sup>60</sup> Instead, it re-conceptualised housework as domestic labour, female work that was of equal value to that performed by men outside of the home. It viewed the home as a woman's workplace, and approached its investigation into conditions of labour there, 'the hours of work for the worker ... her remuneration and her reward', in the manner of a factory inspection, uncovering numerous examples of heavy or overcomplicated work and 'unnecessary drudgery'.<sup>61</sup> Although no part of the home, inside or out, was exempted from investigation, the main concerns prompted by the workplace analogy centred on certain spaces. Two rooms, the kitchen and the scullery, which were seen as 'the workshop of the home' and the places where 'all hard and dirty work' were done, received special attention in the Sub-Committee's investigations and specific suggestions for improvements to these were prioritised in its final reports.<sup>62</sup>

## II

The evidence collected by the Sub-Committee showed how the previous inadequate design of kitchens and sculleries had made women's domestic work both time-consuming and difficult, thus restricting the amount of time that they had available for any external activity. A lack of clarity in the purpose of many existing kitchens and sculleries caused women much additional work, particularly 'the practice of having the bath in the scullery with flap table over it ... [which] meant that the housewife must clear everything from it before the bath could be used' and prevented further use of the scullery for food preparation during bath times.<sup>63</sup> In most homes the internal layout of both rooms was poor, with the consequence that endless short journeys were required for each

simple task. Cooking a meal involved transferring food from inadequate storage facilities to a preparation area and then back to the cooker, with little ease of movement. Mrs Dean, a working woman from Sussex who was interviewed by the Sub-Committee, described the arrangements in her street where the sculleries were completely separate from the house making it 'necessary to go out of doors to reach them'.<sup>64</sup> Other common sources of complaint included poor lighting and ventilation, the difficulty of accessing adequate supplies of hot or cold water, and the lack of taps or waste pipes for dirty water in many sculleries. As one mother from Barton Hill Mothers' School in Bristol, observed, 'There's a crying need for larger living rooms and kitchens ... You must have a kitchen table and seating accommodation. This is one of the greatest faults that the room we are in all the time is the smallest in the house'.<sup>65</sup>

The Sub-Committee agreed that improving the design of the kitchen and the scullery was essential if new homes were to free up women's time to encourage them into greater public engagement. It was fiercely critical of contemporary plans that provided only the appearance of more space, by assuming 'that the living room shall also be the kitchen', a criticism which was 'supported by a large number of working women'.<sup>66</sup> Seeing the kitchen and scullery as primarily a place of work, it suggested a number of design improvements to promote greater efficiency. Some of the problems identified had quite simple and inexpensive solutions. Commenting on some of the Local Government Board/Royal Institute of British Architect plans, Mrs Peel and Mrs Sanderson Furniss observed that they did 'not think that sufficient attention is paid to seeing the work of the housewife. In many of the plans the larder, sink and stove are not grouped together. This adds very much to the work of the housekeeper'.<sup>67</sup> Sub-Committee members advanced several ideas intended to overcome this fault. Mrs Guy wrote a paper on interior design, which suggested a layout for the ideal kitchen. Noting that it was 'exceedingly important in order to facilitate the housewife's duties to secure the closest proximity of related equipment, such as sink, larder, grocery, cupboard and cooking range', she suggested a close arrangement with cooking range at the centre, larder to the right and sink to the left, each of which could be reached without moving more than a few steps if at all, clustering equipment to ensure 'a minimum of waste effort and running about' and offered a short sketch to illustrate her point.<sup>68</sup>

Along with the layout of the kitchen and scullery, Sub-Committee

members examined its fixtures and fittings. They took care to familiarise themselves with as much information as possible so as to give an informed opinion, inviting experts to give presentations to their meetings. These covered a range of topics. Mr Leonard of the Local Government Board offered 'useful information' (albeit 'unofficial ... and strictly confidential') on the advantages of brickwork 'well pointed, and distempered or better still painted with a glossy paint' over plaster in a scullery, and of concrete slabs rather than stone or slate for larders.<sup>69</sup> When tenants of the Bournville Village Trust Estate 'spoke most highly of their ranges—"Forward" made by a Birmingham firm', Mrs Alwyn Lloyd contacted the manufacturers to get pictures and details of their product.<sup>70</sup> Other experts gave information on models of water heaters and cooking stoves, and the Sub-Committee carried out its own experiments to determine what recommendations to make on a range of fixtures.<sup>71</sup> The Sub-Committee's conclusions were also informed by members' own prior knowledge which went beyond England; Mrs Guy advocated bunk beds, 'in general use in Denmark' as a way of alleviating overcrowding in bedrooms.<sup>72</sup> This combined approach sometimes raised contradictions as, despite the inclusion of some working-class women on the Sub-Committee, the largely middle-class expert voices who addressed it could be at odds with the views of working-class tenants. Miss Tabor, an architect who spoke to the Committee about the houses she had designed at Letchworth, favoured whitewash for her kitchen and scullery walls, but admitted that this provoked objections from housewives in her district.<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, working women's voices remained at the forefront of the evidence collected. At Camberwell, they pointed out the financial advantages of suitable larder cupboards, explaining that 'it was cheaper to get groceries in good quantities at a time but one could never do that ... having nowhere to keep things in a hot kitchen.'<sup>74</sup> At Hanley, women wanted 'a good larder ... fac[ing] north' and away from their dustbins with 'a slate slab as well as broad wooden shelves'.<sup>75</sup> Women in the Midlands wanted a sink 'deep so that you can wash up in it'; while in Leeds the demand was for porcelain sinks with plugs that could also be used for bathing children.<sup>76</sup> The final report prioritised the preferences of working-class tenants over middle-class experts and incorporated many of these requests calling for plate racks, deep sinks and draining boards, arranged in a way that would 'save a considerable amount of labour'.<sup>77</sup>

Mark Llewellyn's analysis of the gendered geographies of inter-war

British kitchens suggested that the attempts of women housing reformers to reshape these locations were informed by principles of Taylorism (or 'scientific management') and aimed at improving the efficiency of the domestic worker.<sup>78</sup> There are certainly echoes of this in the writings of some Sub-Committee members such as Mrs Peel, whose wartime collection, *The Labour Saving House*, called for the application of 'modern methods to the working of our households, in which they are needed as much as in the office or factory'.<sup>79</sup> Yet, although she drew parallels between the kitchen and the factory where 'the labour of an over-tired worker becomes practically worthless', neither she nor other members of the Women's Housing Sub-Committee considered efficiency to be an end in itself, or connected it to ideas about improving domestic productivity more generally.<sup>80</sup> Dr Janet Lane-Claypon's post-war advice handbook, *Hygiene of Women and Children*, suggested that 'the facilities ... available for modern houses' meant that the effective housewife 'needs nowadays some knowledge of several branches of science' to perform her work effectively.<sup>81</sup> She called for effective training for housewives, not for the sake of improving productivity or efficiency, but in order to free them for other pursuits:

if a woman would regard herself as a professional worker she would realize at once the importance of a high standard for her work and that it should not be her only occupation throughout the day. She would then do her work more methodically, and would arrange time for mental and physical recreation...<sup>82</sup>

Writing with Marion Phillips, the Labour Party's Women's Officer who was also employed at the Ministry of Reconstruction, Averil Sanderson Furniss explained to the readers of *The Working Woman's House* that improved design would transform the current scullery-kitchen into

a pleasant and well-appointed room in which the housewife can enjoy her work ... It is probable that, as she works, ideas will come to her of new labour-saving devices, and with the feeling of citizenship developed and life more easy and tranquil, she will soon find means of putting forward her ideas.<sup>83</sup>

It was this connection between the domestic environment and women's ability to practise citizenship that distinguished the approach of the Women's Housing Sub-Committee. Its reports valued efficient kitchens not as a means of improving domestic productivity, but because they had the potential to release women from housework in order to enable them to participate more fully in life beyond the home. Its hope was that effectively planned houses

would produce thoughtful and active women citizens who would take their expertise into the wider world of their local communities to promote further social improvements.

After the kitchen and scullery, the Sub-Committee's investigations identified the bathroom as a central source of unnecessarily time-consuming labour that could hamper women's ability to develop into active citizens. Few pre-war working-class homes included a separate room for bathing, an arrangement that women in Bristol decried as failing to 'meet the requirements of convenience or decency'.<sup>84</sup> The portable tin bath, placed in front of the living room fire and filled by hand, was still common in working-class houses; homes with fitted baths were most likely to have them in the scullery, their surface covered by a flap that, as we have seen, doubled as an area for food preparation. In the homes of men who were employed in dirty manual work, or in mining districts where pithead baths were scarce, the husband's homecoming stopped any work in the scullery until bathing was finished, which complicated the preparation of meals. After being cleared and opened, or brought into the house in the case of tin baths, a bath then had to be filled with water heated in pans and kettles, often in a separate room. When the bather had finished, the process had to be reversed to empty the bath, as even fitted scullery baths lacked an attached waste pipe for draining off dirty water. The bath then had to be put away, or the flap table replaced, before the room could be returned to its main purpose.

The Sub-Committee felt so strongly about the need to design houses in such a way as to reduce the amount of physical labour that family bathing imposed on housewives that it was one of the few points on which its reports made a 'definite recommendation', demanding both 'a separate bathroom' and 'a waste pipe and an adequate but simple system of hot and cold water supply'.<sup>85</sup> Hot water was described as 'a sine qua non from the point of view both of personal cleanliness and of labour saving'. As with their discussions on the kitchen, the Sub-Committee presented this as a means of freeing up women's time for a greater purpose, and noted that

A great part of the everyday work of the house ... is doubled by the lack of a proper supply of hot water. The extra strain on the woman's strength, coupled with the waste of time, leaves her without either the opportunity or energy ... to secure any form of recreation for herself.<sup>86</sup>

The women who described the inadequacy of their current bathing arrangements were unclear as to where their desired bathroom

should be situated. In urban areas most investigators' findings concurred with those of Leeds Women's Citizens' League that 'all wish for this upstairs', but enquiries in rural districts often found a preference for a ground-floor bathroom, so that 'wet clothes and boots could be left downstairs and the dirt not taken into the house' by farm labourers returning home at the end of the working day.<sup>87</sup> The Final Report took account of regional differences when discussing location, but was emphatic that a separate bathroom had to be installed somewhere if home design was to stop placing unnecessary restrictions on women's lives.

The Sub-Committee's call for separate bathrooms with adequate hot water supplies and drainage drew fierce criticism, in particular from the Local Government Board who presented a lengthy series of observations on the First Interim Report and its comments on the winning designs in the LGB/RIBA competition. Criticising the fact that the Report both 'recognise[d]' but then 'disregard[ed]' the expense attached to providing hot water, the LGB declared that 'as matters stand [we] are of opinion that less expensive arrangements must be accepted as sufficient'.<sup>88</sup> This reaction was based on false suppositions by the LGB. When its Secretary, Mr Leonard, addressed the Sub-Committee in an unofficial capacity in May, he explained that the Board's investigations had found that 'women witnesses had been strongly in favour' of a communal hot-water supply but that they were only 'willing to pay 6d a week extra', a sum 'he was afraid' was not sufficient.<sup>89</sup> The evidence that the Sub-Committee uncovered told a different story. Talking to women in homes without bathrooms who paid to use public baths, revealed that a higher rent might not impact so heavily on household incomes when the cost of bathing elsewhere was taken into account. In Plaistow in the East End of London they found that 'even in the very poorest districts ... the women were invariably ready to pay 1s a week extra ... [as] it cost them quite that for each member of the family to have a weekly bath at the public baths at 3d each'.<sup>90</sup> Consequently the Sub-Committee made no concessions on this question in its Final Report, which emphasised 'the importance of having the bath in a separate room, and providing it with an adequate hot and cold water supply'.<sup>91</sup> Averil Sanderson Furniss countered the financial argument by emphasising the social inequalities of current provisions. Describing a bathroom as one of the 'necessary essentials for the satisfactory working conditions of a home', she pointed out that, 'if a bathroom is essential to the middle class woman who can afford help in her home, it is surely far more essential to the woman who

has to do all her own work'.<sup>92</sup>

While contemporary commentators argued over the location, design and fittings of the kitchen, scullery and bathroom in working-class homes, none went so far as to deny the necessity of their inclusion in some shape or form. The same, however, cannot be said of the parlour. This extra living room, more than any other space in the inter-war home, provoked clashes between those who argued for its inclusion in all new houses and those who felt that a parlour represented an extravagant aspiration amongst working-class tenants which was best discouraged. Even some housing reformers, Averil Sanderson Furniss acknowledged, were 'inclined to think that this is an unnecessary room in the working woman's home', and preferred slightly larger living rooms instead.<sup>93</sup> Much of the contention surrounding the working-class parlour stemmed from its lack of an obvious function. Whereas other rooms such as the kitchen, bathroom or bedroom had an evident purpose, the parlour was seen as superfluous in houses where a living room was provided. Opponents suggested that adding a parlour would waste both money and space, as with no apparent designation, the room would become 'a sort of mortuary for the family bible and a glass case of wax flowers' that would be 'only used on Sundays'.<sup>94</sup> The LGB, commenting on the Sub-Committee's interim report, was 'not prepared to accept [its] view ... that it is essential that all houses should have a parlour in addition to a living room and scullery', noting that it was 'fully aware of the arguments put forward in support of [this] provision' but concluding that its members 'do not regard it as an essential'.<sup>95</sup>

Again, the Women's Housing Sub-Committee took a different view. It refuted the claim that the working-class parlour was useless, an idea that Phillips and Sanderson Furniss dismissed as being advanced by 'those who are accustomed themselves to a comfortable drawing room, or ... who do not know what it is to have a house full of children'.<sup>96</sup> A majority of the women giving evidence to the Sub-Committee wanted a parlour in their homes, although they differed as to why it might be needed. In some districts, investigators found that the wish for a parlour was connected to ideas of decency and respectability in regard to customs surrounding death. In an era when most people died at home, death could raise practical challenges in small, overcrowded houses, and exacerbated the problems of inadequate design. Other evidence received by the Sub-Committee had pointed out the importance of designing 'stairs ... wide enough and so arranged as to allow of a coffin being carried down them'.<sup>97</sup> Once

downstairs, there was the question of where to store the body between the moment of death and burial. A parlour offered an obvious answer. Women in Bourneville explained that they wanted parlours that would be 'big enough to hold a coffin' to improve on their current practice of keeping it 'under the kitchen table' between a family death and the funeral. The desire of these Midlands women to see better homes than their current ones that offered 'no room to live in and no room to die' mirrored the pre-war findings of social investigator Florence Bell, whose study of Middlesbrough had linked the provision of an adequate parlour to the essential rite of passage of the wake.<sup>98</sup>

When the needs of the living were considered, women tended not to claim a parlour for themselves, but saw it as a way of providing a more pleasant environment for the leisure of other members of the family. Housewives in Camberwell wanted parlours for their husbands '[b]ecause there should always be somewhere for "him" to go and sit to rest himself'.<sup>99</sup> Many mothers felt that the parlour was most needed when their eldest children wanted to bring friends home, or in adolescence when it offered young courting couples a location 'preferable ... [to] the street corners or public house'.<sup>100</sup> Champions of the working-class parlour suggested that its lack of purpose gave it a symbolic value, which was important to many women. In her presentation to the Sub-Committee, the architect Miss Tabor stated that in her experience women liked the parlour because 'it seems to represent all the sides of life that are not workaday'.<sup>101</sup> The Municipal Journal connected the parlour's new popularity to 'the higher standard of living during the war', and welcomed the Sub-Committee's findings, declaring itself 'glad of the assurance that the working classes are demanding the "extra" room, and, what is more to the point, are using it'.<sup>102</sup>

Research into nineteenth-century domestic interiors has drawn attention to the gendered spatial practices at work in middle-class homes, as well as their impact on women's wider activities. Deborah Cohen and Jane Hamlett have argued that the designation of certain rooms as 'feminine' could, in Hamlett's words, 'ensure the empowerment' of women as much as their segregation.<sup>103</sup> Hamlett's reading of late nineteenth-century domestic advice literature aimed at a middle-class readership has uncovered several examples of authors arguing for the inclusion of desks and writing tables in the drawing room, suggesting that the space might promote female autonomy through encouraging pursuits such as writing. These included some early writing by Mrs C.S. Peel that raged against the failure of feminine desks designed

for the boudoir to meet the needs of the modern business woman.<sup>104</sup> Mrs Peel's recognition that the home might function as an intellectual and professional as well as a domestic workspace for middle-class women carried over into her work with the Women's Housing Sub-Committee, where she and other members acknowledged the parlour's importance in providing for certain forms of leisure for working-class women. In their reports and in their wider writings, Sub-Committee members argued that the parlour, more than any other space in the house, demonstrated what a woman might aspire to if her surroundings permitted. The Interim Report concurred with the opinions they had gathered as to the desirability of a room for children to do lessons or visitors to be entertained in private, but went beyond these to note that a parlour was indispensable '[w]here a member of the family is an official of some organisation' when it 'may often be wanted for the purpose of an interview or meeting'. Women's Co-operative Guild members such as Eleanor Barton would have had first-hand experience of trying to fit their political work into limited domestic spaces, clearing the dining-room table to write papers or speeches, then moving again when meal-times approached. When Sanderson Furniss and Phillips returned to this theme in *The Working Woman's House* they made an equally clear link between the parlour and woman's new role:

The home should make possible the social amenities of civilised life ... This is why her demand for a parlour is so definite ... there must be the opportunities for the quiet which any sort of intellectual work necessitates ... a fitting framework for the development of good citizenship.<sup>105</sup>

Their suggestion for the design of an ideal parlour continued the emphasis on the parlour as a site for self-improvement with the only stipulation as to fittings being that the room 'should be provided with bookshelves and a window-seat'.<sup>106</sup>

The parlour, more than any other room, allowed scope for considering the ways in which housewives might use the time freed through labour-saving devices and improved interior design to further their development as citizens through reading and quiet, independent study. Other reformers picked up this argument. One architect, Robert Thomson, drew up plans for a 'health promoting dwelling' which he presented to the Sub-Committee in April 1918. His proposals included a small parlour upstairs, with heat radiating upwards from an 'almost costless central heating system' downstairs. Thompson believed that including parlours in working-class houses would benefit society as a whole by enabling

'occupants to take advantage of the liberal educational schemes now being advanced'.<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, he cautioned, omitting them would create 'two distinct classes of occupants ... the one benefitting by the educational advantages which the parlour provides, the other in corresponding degree handicapped by the educational drawbacks which the lack of parlour accommodation imposes'.<sup>108</sup> Sub-Committee members took a more gendered approach and were specifically concerned with a parlour's potential to develop women's political interests. Averil Sanderson Furniss described the new attitudes developing after the war, when women, too, are interesting themselves more and more in outside matters such as Trade Unionism, club and political work and study groups. These activities need not be carried on entirely outside the home if there is a parlour where interviews can take place, and where a few people may meet quietly to discuss and study together.<sup>109</sup>

In common with the Ministry of Reconstruction's other advisory committees, the Women's Housing Sub-Committee disbanded on delivery of its Final Report in January 1919. Sanderson Furniss later described this document as 'probably the most comprehensive ... in existence on the subject of the small house, covering as it does every detail connected with the design, construction and internal fittings of working-class houses' as well as observations concerning gardens, playgrounds, fuel stores, tool sheds and a separate section on rural housing.<sup>110</sup> The evidence supporting the report is even richer in the detail it offers about working-class women's concerns and priorities. Yet, although women had managed to incorporate some feminist demands into post-war welfare policy in other areas of the Ministry's work, the unique perspective of the Sub-Committee's final report and its wealth of detail made little impact on Government plans for working-class housing.<sup>111</sup> The Local Government Board had responded fiercely to the criticism levelled against it in the Sub-Committee's Interim Report by calling the work and abilities of its members into question.<sup>112</sup> Alison Ravetz and Richard Turkington have suggested that it was the condemnation of the LGB, which 'ridiculed [the Sub-Committee's] suggestions as Utopian', that ensured 'that these had little or no immediate effect on council house design'.<sup>113</sup> Other historians such as Mark Swenarton believe that the Women's Housing Sub-Committee's findings were eclipsed by those of the (male) Tudor Walters' Committee, as the latter was a less 'disreputable' body in 'the eyes of the establishment'.<sup>114</sup> There is broad agreement that the women's

recommendations were more uncompromising than those of Sir John Tudor Walters' report; they demanded the complete separation of kitchen and living areas and the inclusion of parlours and bathrooms, and prioritised the creation of 'good working conditions' for women.<sup>115</sup> Yet, as the history of post-war reconstruction has shown, even the less radical recommendations of the Tudor Walters' committee were swiftly watered down or overlooked in the difficult economic circumstances of the 1920s.<sup>116</sup>

### III

Though the Women's Housing Sub-Committee's suggestions were not implemented on a systematic scale by post-war governments, the underlying message of its reports, linking the question of housing reform to the emerging discussion about how to shape women as responsible citizens, permeated political discourses in the 1920s. The suggestion that new women voters' ability to participate fully in the political life of the nation might be connected in some way to the interior design and layout of their homes was explored across the political spectrum. In the aftermath of the passing of the Representation of the People Act, all of the political parties strove to find ways to secure women's votes and also to convert this support into active party membership, now that all three parties permitted women to become full individual members. It was widely accepted that there was a unified 'women's vote', fuelling an assumption that whichever party succeeded in capturing it would be assured of electoral success. The veteran feminist campaigner Ray Strachey recalled how the Act had not been on the statute book a fortnight before the House of Commons discovered that every Bill ... had a "woman's side", and the Party Whips began eagerly to ask "what the women thought" ... Letters from women constituents no longer went straight into wastepaper baskets ... and the agents of the women's societies were positively welcomed at Westminster.<sup>117</sup>

In much the same spirit as the Women's Housing Sub-Committee, Conservative, Liberal and Labour politicians now looked to the home as a means of mobilising women into political activity and winning them to an individual party cause. Party strategies for recruiting women members used the home as a way of appealing to particular 'feminine' interests, seeking to engage women in politics through their everyday concerns. The propaganda that parties aimed at new women voters therefore addressed a range of issues previously unconnected to national political discourse such as food prices and domestic budgets. At the same time, the

organisers in charge of the various party women's sections believed that improving the shape and form of the domestic interior could be a way of enabling previously apolitical women to involve themselves more fully in political activity outside their homes. As their presence on the Sub-Committee has indicated, socialist organisations such as the Women's Labour League and the Women's Co-Operative Guild had an interest in the housing question which remained evident during the 1920s. Socialist women continued to argue that the most effective means of transforming working-class housewives into activists was through implementing improvements in housing design that would afford them greater free time to devote to politics. Speaking to a Women's Labour League conference that was convened in conjunction with the Ideal Home exhibition in 1920, Eleanor Barton re-iterated the Sub-Committee's call for new homes to include parlours, as 'the women of today who were taking a broader outlook required the extra room for purposes of study'.<sup>118</sup> As socialists and trade unions continued to lobby government to deliver on post-war promises of improved housing stock, housing was seen as an issue that had the potential to politicise women by encouraging them to make connections between their immediate living conditions and their newfound citizenship, and then demonstrating how they might use this citizenship to improve their daily lives. Women's 'first task of citizenship', it was suggested, was 'to improve the home', while a leaflet aimed at women voters in 1918 urged them to consider whether they wanted houses which were 'a mere shelter, or a home in which you can enjoy warmth, quiet and recreation'.<sup>119</sup> The Labour Party's women's newspaper, *Labour Woman*, carried a regular 'Housing' column throughout the 1920s, which combined reports on national issues and campaigns with reviews of relevant literature including *The Working Woman's Home*. In a similar vein, a party leaflet of 1918 entitled 'Why women should join the Labour Party' suggested that party activism offered the best forum to give 'expression to the views of women so that in future they shall decide what kind of house they want and insist on the state and municipal authorities providing it'.<sup>120</sup> Averil Sanderson Furniss urged the formation of local Women's Housing Action Committees affiliated to the Labour Party in anticipation of the fact that voting women 'will take a far greater part in local politics than they have done in the past'.<sup>121</sup> Thus, at the local level, engaging women in discussions about the design of their homes was seen as the first step to a much larger process of participating in political campaigns.<sup>122</sup>

Labour Party literature continued to argue for modernisation along the lines proposed by the Women's Housing Sub-Committee throughout the 1920s. In the 1923 pamphlet 'Better times for the Housewife', Labour MP Herbert Morrison returned to the analogy of the home as a 'mother's workshop' and suggested some design innovations that might improve its efficiency, including 'curved junctions of wall and floor including corners' which would make for swifter and more effective cleaning. Morrison's pamphlet echoed Mrs Peel's more Taylorist suggestions by connecting home improvements to national efficiency, and justifying the more costly innovations in similar terms. On the matter of installing domestic electricity, for example, he wrote:

Let us now turn to the questions of light, heat and power. In the building of a modern factory where the employer wants to get the best possible out of his workpeople they are matters of much importance. Why not in the running of a house?<sup>123</sup>

Yet, as with the Sub-Committee's consideration of such improvements, Morrison's suggestions were not aimed at improving productivity in order to make women more efficient housewives, as Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky was attempting to do at the same time in Frankfurt.<sup>124</sup> Instead, it was the connection between a woman's home environment and her ability to perform the full duties of citizenship which was emphasised, although Morrison's focus was on her ability, as a mother, to foster future generations of voters. He argued that mothers who were 'over-burdened' could not give proper attention to their children; therefore only through improvements in home design could women have sufficient time for 'that care and attention ... which is necessary in the training of the future citizens of the country'.<sup>125</sup>

Socialist women were also prepared to investigate radically different schemes for housing reform. Their desire to reconfigure domestic interiors in ways that might promote a more active political involvement by women extended to experiments with different forms of communal housekeeping. These proved controversial, creating what Ravetz has described as 'an interesting gap ... between the ideals of the sub-committee and the working-class women' it interviewed, and continued to be a matter of debate among politically active women on the left in the 1920s.<sup>126</sup> The Women's Housing Sub-Committee had viewed a number of communal schemes, many of which had been inspired by the inauguration of communal 'National' kitchens during the First World War. Reactions to these innovations were shaped by class. Mrs C.S. Peel suggested that they played an important role

in popularising restaurant dining, by freeing middle-class women from a belief that it was 'immoral to eat food which has not been cooked in our own homes'; but they appear to have been unpopular among working-class housewives as they were too redolent of soup kitchens and charity.<sup>127</sup> Attitudes to communal laundries were similarly defined by social class: middle-class housewives had frequently had their bed and table-linen 'sent out', a practice that decreased at the end of the war as laundry costs spiralled,<sup>128</sup> while Rowan's analysis of the Women's Labour League's discussions of communal schemes has noted that the 'working-class suspicion' of these laundries should be viewed 'in the context of centuries of communal living in slum tenements'.<sup>129</sup> Playgrounds and shared social spaces were one thing, but the Sub-Committee's final Report recognised that laundries and kitchens were quite another, and observed that it was not 'probable that communal kitchens in which women could come in and cook for themselves will ever find favour'.<sup>130</sup> Marion Phillips, the Labour Party's Chief Woman Officer from 1919, explained that this was more of a result of the levels of involuntary sharing that poverty, war and poor housing had forced on working-class women rather than of any innate conservatism on their part. She warned against imposing middle-class solutions on working-class women, and cautioned her members to recognise that it was 'not a narrow individualism which makes a woman demand that in addition to any form of communal kitchen she should have in her own home fittings' for cooking.<sup>131</sup> Yet, despite recognising that they might have been out of step with the opinions of working-class women on this point, she and other socialist women continued to explore co-operative schemes as a means of augmenting provision in private homes to save 'time and money and labour and improve the general amenities of life'.<sup>132</sup> Labour Woman presented communal schemes as both innovative and essential, if individual working-class households were to benefit from the labour-saving potential of advances in modern design. Studies of local Labour women's work in the inter-war years have similarly found continuing support for them among activists such as Hannah Mitchell, who urged women voters in Manchester to abandon their washing on polling day 'and vote for more public washhouses', although their association with poverty continued to make them controversial among working-class tenants.<sup>133</sup> Socialist women may have been alone in considering communal schemes, but the Labour Party was certainly not unique in suggesting that better planned homes were a prerequisite for

enabling women to function more fully as citizens in post-war Britain. As David Thackeray and others have noted, in the decade that separated women's partial and full enfranchisement, a fiercely 'competitive dialogue' developed between parties as they sought to secure the support of new women voters.<sup>134</sup> The Conservative Party similarly emphasised women's domestic concerns, but went further than other parties by suggesting that the home was not only a site where active Conservative women could be made but was also a place where potential socialists could be defeated. Conservative propaganda thus presented the home as an ideological battleground the design of which had wider social implications. The title of the party's women's magazine, *Home and Politics*, reflected the central role that these domestic matters had in Conservative attempts to reach women voters in the 1920s. *Home and Politics* aimed to familiarise its women readers with Conservative perspectives on a range of political issues deemed to be of relevance to them. In a series of apocalyptic articles entitled 'Ourselves under the Socialists', it warned of the dangers of voting Labour and its consequences for the individual home and the nuclear family, and woman's position within them. 'The home will go' under socialism, E. Glanville warned in the first article in September 1920: 'Where there is "free love", there can be no "homes". Where the State takes responsibility for children, "home" is not wanted'.<sup>135</sup> Socialist women's championing of communal housekeeping was thus seen as part of a sinister desire to undermine housewives' power in their own homes. Supporting the home as a means of defence against the threat of socialist collectivisation was presented as one of the first responsibilities of new women voters, as a later issue of *Home and Politics* explained: 'The home and the children have ever been the woman's sphere of interest. The vote has added to her duties. She now has the power of defending and advancing home life which is the very basis of our civilisation'.<sup>136</sup>

Elsewhere, Conservative literature developed the message that socialism could be defeated in the home as effectively as on the factory floor. A series of leaflets for women voters, entitled 'Over the Garden Wall', featured imaginary discussions between Mrs Brown and her younger neighbour Mrs Jones. In their conversations, whenever Mrs Jones was tempted by socialist propaganda, the older, wiser Mrs Brown was always on hand to point out what this would really mean. On the question of shopping, Mrs Brown warned that a Labour government 'wouldn't let you [shop where you want]. The State'll take over the shops

and there won't be any other shopkeepers'. Mrs Jones, amazed, rethought her position: 'Dear me, I'd no idea the "Labour Party" was going to do all that. I'm quite sure I shan't want to see a "Labour" Government after this, and I certainly won't vote for one'.<sup>137</sup> Mrs Jones' husband worked with socialists who were constantly 'trying to get hold of him', but Mrs Brown encouraged her to counter this propaganda at home. 'Tell him it's the Conservatives that have done things'.<sup>138</sup> These themes returned in a later illustrated column in *Home and Politics*, 'Mrs Maggs and Betty', that used the same trope of a young impressionable woman in danger of falling for the promises of manipulative socialists who was saved for the Conservative cause by an older, more politically astute friend.<sup>139</sup>

If socialism could be defeated in the home, Conservatives might also be made there. Conservative Party propaganda concurred with that produced by rival political parties about the necessity for improvements in home design in order to free new women voters to develop their party involvement. A long article in *Home and Politics* on 'The Value of the Home' in June 1921 explained the political importance of this issue:

The home may be simplified and the labour entailed very much lessened. Good food, simply prepared and served will be enjoyed under the mental stimulation derived from books and conversation, only possible where the mistress is a thinking being, perhaps a wage-earner herself with a broader outlook in consequence.<sup>140</sup>

*Home and Politics* reflected other opportunities for new women voters, and connected them to party ideology. Its readership was more middle class than that of *Labour Woman*, which was reflected in its content. Many of the more affluent young women who had taken up paid work during the war now sought to remain in employment in the 1920s, their ambitions encouraged by the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919, which opened to women previously masculine professions such as the law. Other careers also emerged, some of which reflected the prevailing post-war interest in reconstruction of the built environment. The journal *Women's Employment*, which combined lists of vacancies with articles advising on career options, suggested 'house decorating and furnishing' as an ideal 'profession for women ... [with] ample room for [them] to work'. Traditionally feminine knowledge suddenly had commercial value, the article implied: 'A home may be full of furniture of all kinds, which for lack of knowledge in arrangement does not look its best'.<sup>141</sup> Reflecting this trend, the Incorporated Institute of British Decorators decided finally to admit

women as members from the end of the war.<sup>142</sup> Several features in *Home and Politics* invested interior décor and design with political overtones. 'Home House and Dress', a column which ran between 1921 and 1923, carried a number of items on these themes. Although much of what was included replicated the tone of similar items in mainstream, non-party women's periodicals, some columns did suggest that interior design might have a deeper political potential. An item advising on 'a nicely arranged bedroom' recommended that 'there should be always at least one nice easy chair' to provide space for 'a quiet hour's read ... away from the noise of the downstairs rooms'.<sup>143</sup> Again, the planning and design of the home was directly connected to a woman's ability to study, think and develop informed opinions, all of which were essential if she was to become an active citizen.

In common with Labour and Conservative activists, the Liberal Party similarly linked the home to women's ability to engage in politics and saw women's potential to contribute to post-war housing debates as a means of encouraging them to develop their identity as citizens. At a meeting in Southall convened to provide information to the Women's Housing Sub-Committee, Gertrude Richardson from the local Women's Liberal Association described redevelopment as work in which 'women ought to take a large share ... [as] it is the woman who spends most of her time in the home and the house is her workshop'. Richardson presented this as an obligation stemming from women's new political role rather than a matter of self-interest deriving from her position as a wife or mother:

Women moreover now rank as citizens ... It is urgent therefore that women should equip themselves with practical knowledge of housing questions, think out clearly what improvements are most required, and arouse the interest of others. The more they prepare the ground in these ways, the more influence will their views carry.<sup>144</sup>

Like the other two parties, the Liberal Party produced propaganda aimed at women that connected immediate domestic concerns with broader political questions. So, in a short article entitled 'Happy Families: The Liberal Ideal' that appeared in the *Liberal Women's News* in January 1925, working-class housewife Mrs Smith is shown to be happy under a Liberal government, 'because ... there would be absolute Free Trade; housekeeping money would go further ... her house would be easy to run, and her work would be made lighter by cheap electricity and electrical appliances'.<sup>145</sup> Electricity and other modern conveniences featured

repeatedly in Liberal Party literature for women, but the question of communal housekeeping was not raised. Rather, it was suggested that key Liberal economic policies such as free trade and higher taxation of the drinks industry would deliver the necessary benefits.

The Liberal Party shared with Labour and the Conservatives a conviction that poor household design was the main obstacle to women becoming active in party work. The Liberal Women's News carried a 'Household hints' column with advice aimed at giving its readers more 'leisure time in order that you in your turn may feel more able to use it in Liberal work amongst your neighbours'. The paper also ran a short series on 'Everyday Lives', outlining the restrictions that design flaws placed on housewives whose husbands were 'engaged in trades which at present necessitate considerably more than the usual amount of housework for their wives'. Each article emphasised how this precluded party-political engagement; examples included the miner's wife invited to an afternoon Liberal Women's Meeting who replied that she 'should like to come, but I've my husband coming from the pit at three, and there will be his bath water to get and then his dinner'.<sup>146</sup> The message to readers was clear: indoor bathrooms and efficiently-planned kitchens would reverse the post-war decline in the Liberal Party's fortunes by capturing the allegiance of new women voters and transforming them into party activists. Responsibility for bringing about this change rested firmly on the shoulders of women themselves, as the Liberal MP Harry Barnes who chaired the London Housing League explained to readers of the Liberal Women's News in January 1925:

[I]f the women of England continue to be badly housed or not at all, it will be their own fault. They can make the majority both in Parliament and Municipal Elections, and if they really care about decent housing more than anything else they can send men both to Parliament and the Town and District councils who care in the same way.<sup>147</sup>

#### IV

There was therefore a consensus among the political parties in the 1920s that improving the domestic interior was of critical importance if new women voters were to be developed into responsible political actors. This attitude was in turn closely related to the particular circumstances which prevailed at the end of the First World War. Increasing levels of wartime privation and the emergence of the concept of the 'Home Front' had connected

women's domestic labour to the national economy, bringing new recognition of the importance of women's traditional work in the home to the progress of the war. At the same time, wartime circumstances had opened up employment opportunities for women in government, and caused politicians to place a new value on women's domestic expertise, leading to their appointment to several key roles in wartime ministries charged with managing the Home Front, from where they were well placed to play a role in shaping policy on reconstruction.

The domestic focus of much of women's involvement in wartime government coupled with the centrality of housing to discussions of post-war reconstruction made it inevitable that women's participation would be sought in this area. Consequently women's presence on committees charged with shaping post-war housing policy ought not to be interpreted as signalling a conservative attempt to restore more traditional gender roles once the exceptional conditions of wartime were over.<sup>148</sup> Rather, it reflects a change in the status of domestic space, which had begun during the war, and was to continue during the 1920s and 1930s. The 1918 Representation of the People Act transformed women's relationship to the state, giving them the potential to become full and equal citizens, and it is in this context that their work in attempting to shape post-war housing design needs to be viewed. The connection between the domestic environment and female citizenship that underpinned the findings of the Women's Housing Sub-Committee continued to permeate the discourse of all three of the major political parties in the 1920s, leading to a consensus on the importance of addressing domestic issues in the partisan literature they aimed at new women voters, which continued beyond the arrival of the equal franchise in 1928.

Through its investigations and reports, the Women's Housing Sub-Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction reconceptualised the home as a key site where new female citizens could be produced, if its design allowed. Its members' work went beyond earlier attempts to recruit women into political activity through addressing their domestic concerns. Rather than just seeing housing as one of a number of questions that might spark women's interest in politics, their approach suggested that its design would determine their ability to engage in political activity in a sustained fashion. Demanding that new social housing should be designed from the point of view of the housewife, the Sub-Committee's members recognised the home's internal spaces as formative locations for working-class women's active participation in the post-war state.

Its investigations gave a voice to working-class women in post-war housing debates, while the presence of some working-class women among its membership added authority to their claims to speak on behalf of this constituency. Their conclusions, which combined the findings of numerous women's groups throughout England and Wales, demanded houses with new internal spatial configurations which would afford housewives who had just become—or were about to become—citizens the space to think about and discuss politics, along with labour-saving devices to free up time for them to play a more active role in civic life.

Although few of the Sub-Committee's recommendations were realised in the 1920s, its acceptance of a connection between the physical layout of a woman's home and her ability to play an active role in the life of the wider society therefore permeated wider party political discourses in this decade, and continued to resonate into the 1930s. As all parties sought to engage what they believed to be an undifferentiated new constituency of women voters, each of them began to pay attention to the role that home design might play in capturing the 'women's vote'. By the end of the 1920s debates on this question had begun to take a more partisan form, with Conservatives and Socialists in particular presenting the home as a key battleground where women's support might be won or lost. Local women's groups aligned to political parties took up the issue of housing, seeing it as a key issue and attempting to keep it on their parties' national agenda.<sup>149</sup> A number of non-aligned women's groups also continued to campaign on this issue throughout the inter-war period, arguing for women to have input into campaigns for better housing on the basis of their specific feminine expertise.<sup>150</sup> The private world of the domestic interior had assumed a very public dimension, with its design and interior layout seen as key factors in allowing women to develop and express their new social identity as citizens.

## Footnotes

↩\* Versions of this paper were presented at the 'Home and Social Identity in Twentieth-Century European Cities' session of the European Urban History Association in Prague in September 2012 and at the workshop 'The Heart of the Home: Towards a Social History of Domestic Space in Twentieth-Century Europe' held at the University of Sapienza, Rome, in September 2013. The author would like to thank the organisers of these sessions, Bruno Bonomo

and Simon Gunn, for their comments.

<sup>1</sup> A.D. Sanderson Furniss and M. Phillips, *The Working Woman's House* (London, 1919), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> For Hill, see A. Anderson and E. Darling 'The Hill Sisters: Cultural Philanthropy and the Embellishment of Lives in Late Nineteenth-Century England', in E. Darling and L. Whitworth, eds., *Women and the Making of Built Space in England, 1870–1950* (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 33–50.

<sup>4</sup> J.V. Gottlieb and R. Toye, 'Introduction', in J.V. Gottlieb and R. Toye, eds., *The Aftermath of Suffrage: Women, Gender and Politics in Britain, 1918–1945* (Basingstoke, 2013), p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> A. Bingham, 'Enfranchisement, Feminism and the Modern Woman: Debates in the British Popular Press, 1918–1939', in Gottlieb and Toye, eds., *Aftermath*, p. 94. See also E. Darling, 'Enriching and Enlarging the Whole Sphere of Human Activities', in C. Lawrence and A.K. Mayer, eds., *Regenerating England: Science, Medicine and Culture in Inter-War Britain* (Amsterdam, 2000), p. 155.

<sup>6</sup> A. Clark, 'The Rhetoric of Chartist Domesticity: Gender, Language and Class in the 1830s and 1840s', *Journal of British Studies*, xxxi (1992), pp. 62–88. See also M. De Larrabeiti, 'Conspicuous Before the World: The Political Rhetoric of Chartist Women', in E. Yeo, *Radical Femininity: Women's Self-Representation in the Public Sphere* (Manchester, 1998) pp. 106–26; H. Rogers, *Women and the People: Authority, Authorship and the Radical Tradition in Nineteenth-Century England* (Aldershot, 2000); J. Schwarzkopf, *Women in the Chartist Movement* (London, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> C. Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780–1870* (London, 1992). Work that investigates the connections between women's growing political involvement during the nineteenth century and their domestic identity includes K. Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens: Women, Gender and Political Culture in Britain, 1815–1867* (Oxford, 2009); S. Morgan, *A Victorian Woman's Place: Public Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 2007); S. Richardson, *The Political Worlds of Women: Gender and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London, 2013). For politicised uses of material culture in the nineteenth-century home, see L. Walker and V. Ware, 'Political Pincushions:

Decorating the Abolitionist Interior, 1787–1865' in I. Bryden and J. Floyd, eds., *Domestic Space: Reading the Nineteenth Century Interior* (Manchester, 1999), pp. 58–83.

<sup>8</sup> For details, see P. Hollis, *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government, 1870–1914* (Oxford, 1987).

<sup>9</sup> C. Rowan, 'Women in the Labour Party, 1906–20', *Feminist Review*, xii (1985), p. 76.

<sup>10</sup> K. Hunt, 'Gendering the Politics of the Working Woman's Home', in Darling and Whitworth, eds., *Women and the Making of Built Space*, p. 121.

<sup>11</sup> J. Giles, 'A Home of One's Own: Women and Domesticity in England 1918–1950', *Women's Studies International Forum*, xvi (1993), p. 239. The connections between home, domesticity and politics are further explored in Giles's book, *The Parlour and the Suburb: Domestic Identity, Femininity and the Suburb* (Oxford, 2004), although this concentrates on the period from the 1930s onwards.

<sup>12</sup> Giles, *The Parlour and the Suburb*, p. 12; A. Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism Between the Wars* (London, 1991), p. 10.

<sup>13</sup> Darling, 'Enriching and Enlarging the Whole Sphere of Human Activities', p. 150.

<sup>14</sup> E. Darling, 'A Citizen as well as a Housewife: New Spaces of Femininity in 1930s London', in H. Heynen and G. Baydar, eds., *Negotiating Domesticity: Spatial Productions of Gender in Modern Architecture* (London, 2005), p. 54.

<sup>15</sup> C. Beaumont, "'Where to Park the Pram?'" Voluntary Women's Organisations, Citizenship and the Campaign for Better Housing in England, 1928–1945', *Women's History Review*, xxii (2013) p. 77.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, C. Hall, 'Married Women at Home in Birmingham in the 1920s and 1930s', *Oral History*, v (1977), pp. 62–83; Manchester Women's History Group, 'Ideology in Bricks and Mortar: Women's Housing in Manchester Between the Wars', *North West Labour History*, xii (1987), pp. 24–48; A. Hughes and K. Hunt, 'A Culture Transformed? Women's Lives in Wythenshawe in the 1930s', in A. Davies and S. Fielding, eds., *Workers' Worlds: Cultures and Communities in Manchester and Salford, 1880–1939* (Manchester, 1992), pp. 74–101.

<sup>17</sup> A. Ravetz, 'A View from the Interior', in J. Attfield and P. Kirkham, eds., *A View from the Interior: Feminism, Women and Design* (London, 1987), p. 194; B. McFarlane,

'Homes Fit for Heroines: Housing in the Twenties', in *Matrix, Making Space: Women and the Man-Made Environment* (London, 1985), p. 26.

<sup>18.</sup> One exception is Mark Swenarton, whose comparison of the Sub-Committee's recommendations with those of the better-known Tudor Walters Committee that reported to the Local Government Board in 1918, found the women's report to be 'more resolute in its endorsement of working-class demands', but says little about how it arrived at this priority: M. Swenarton, *Homes Fit for Heroes: The Politics and Architecture of Early State Housing in Britain* (London, 1981), p. 98.

<sup>19.</sup> For example, see Beaumont, 'Where to Park the Pram?', and Giles, 'A Home of One's Own', both of which draw briefly on Ravetz's published summary of the Sub-Committee's work.

<sup>20.</sup> Ministry of Reconstruction, *Report on the Work of the Ministry for the Period ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1918*, *British Parliamentary Papers [hereafter BPP] 1919, Cd. 9231*, p. 3.

<sup>21.</sup> For an account of the establishment and work of the Ministry, see P.B. Johnson, *Land Fit for Heroes* (London, 1968), and C. Addison, *Four and a Half Years* (London, 1934).

<sup>22.</sup> K.O. and J. Morgan, *Portrait of a Progressive: The Political Career of Christopher, Viscount Addison* (Oxford, 1980), p. 71.

<sup>23.</sup> For the centrality of housing to the reconstruction agenda, see Johnson, *Land Fit for Heroes*, pp. 12–13; J. Burnett, *A Social History of Housing, 1850–1970* (London, 1978), pp. 215–18; Swenarton, *Homes Fit for Heroes*.

<sup>24.</sup> *Report of the Work of the Ministry*, p. 3.

<sup>25.</sup> On this subject, see Johnson, *Land Fit for Heroes*, ch. 4.

<sup>26.</sup> Quoted in D. Hardy, 'War, Planning and Social Change: The Example of the Garden City Campaign, 1914–1918', *Planning Perspectives*, iv (1989), p. 192. See also P. Abrams, 'The Failure of Social Reform: 1918–1920', *Past and Present*, no. 24 (1963), pp. 43–64.

<sup>27.</sup> Burnett, *Social History of Housing*, pp. 215–16.

<sup>28.</sup> Lloyd George made the pledge during a speech at Wolverhampton in November 1918: see L.F. Orbach, *Homes for Heroes: A Study of the Evolution of British Public*

Housing, 1915–21 (London, 1977), p. 42.

<sup>29</sup> For an analysis of the vote as a ‘reward’ for war work see A. Marwick, *War and Social Change in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1974), pp. 76–7. Other accounts of women’s war work include G. Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War* (London, 1981); D. Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls: Women Workers in World War One* (London, 2000); A. Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War* (London, 1994).

<sup>30</sup> M. Zimmeck, ‘Strategies and Stratagems for the Employment of Women in the British Civil Service, 1919–1939’, *The Historical Journal*, xxvii (1984), p. 906.

<sup>31</sup> For the nineteenth century, see Hollis, *Ladies Elect*; P. Hollis, ‘Women in Council: Separate Spheres, Public Space’, in J. Rendall, ed., *Equal or Different: Women’s Politics, 1880–1914* (Oxford, 1987) pp. 192–213; F.K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1980).

<sup>32</sup> Mrs C.S. Peel, *Ten Shillings a Head Per Week for House Books* (London, 1899); Mrs. Pember Reeves, *Round About a Pound a Week* (London, 1913).

<sup>33</sup> Mrs C.S. Peel, *Life’s Enchanted Cup* (London, 1933), p. 186.

<sup>34</sup> Report on the Work of the Ministry, Appendix I, Appendix II.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>36</sup> Rowan, ‘Women in the Labour Party’, p. 88.

<sup>37</sup> The National Archives [hereafter TNA], RECO 1/618, Mr Young, memo on establishing a Women’s Advisory Committee, 31 Jan. 1918.

<sup>38</sup> Abrams, ‘The Failure of Social Reform’, p. 60. Against this claim, see Ravetz, ‘A View From the Interior,’ p. 194.

<sup>39</sup> Darling, ‘New Spaces of Domesticity’, p. 51.

<sup>40</sup> For biographical notes on Lady Emmott see the Lady (Mary Gertrude) Emmott papers, London, The Women’s Library @ LSE, GB 106 7MGE; C. Law, *Women: A Modern Political Dictionary* (London, 2000), pp. 58–9.

<sup>41</sup> For Eleanor Barton, see D. Doughan, ‘Barton [née Stockton], Eleanor (1872/3–1960)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [hereafter ODNB]; ‘Barton, Eleanor, (1872–1960)’, in J.M. Bellamy and J. Saville, eds., *Dictionary of Labour Biography*, I (London, 1972); and G. Scott,

Feminism, Femininity and the Politics of Working Women: The Women's Co-Operative Guild (London, 1998). For Janet Lane-Clayton, see W. Winkelstein jr, 'Clayton, Janet Elizabeth Lane- (1877–1967)', ODNB, and for Dorothy Peel, see D.S. Ryan, 'Peel [née Bayliff], Constance Dorothy Evelyn (1868–1934)', ODNB. For Sybella Branford, see S. Branford and A. Farquharson, *An Introduction to Regional Surveys* (London, 1924); J. Scott, 'Branford, Victor Verasis (1863–1930)', ODNB; obituary, *The Times*, 15 June 1926. For Averil Sanderson Furniss, see H.S. Furniss, *Memories of Sixty Years* (London, 1931). For Maud M. Jeffrey, see M. Brion and A. Tinker, *Women in Housing: Access and Influence* (London, 1980), pp. 69–73. For Gerda Sebbelov Guy, see J.W. Leonard, ed., *Women's Who's Who of America: A Biographical Dictionary of Contemporary Women of the United States and Canada, 1914–15* (New York, 1914; repr. Detroit, IL, 1976). Other biographical information appears in the notes of the meeting of the advisory council: TNA, RECO 1/618, 31 Jan. 1918.

<sup>42.</sup> For women's involvement in debates around post-war housing in Scotland, see M.H. Irwin, *Industrial Housing from the Housewife's Point of View* (Edinburgh, 1918).

<sup>43.</sup> TNA, RECO/1/627, Gertrude Emmott to Dr Addison, July 1918.

<sup>44.</sup> TNA, RECO 1/618, memo from Mr Young, 31 Jan. 1918.

<sup>45.</sup> McFarlane, 'Homes Fit for Heroines', p. 30; Ministry of Reconstruction Advisory Council, *Women's Housing Sub-Committee Final Report*, BPP 1919, Cd. 9232.

<sup>46.</sup> Ministry of Reconstruction, Advisory Council *Women's Housing Sub Committee First Interim Report*, BPP 1918, Cd. 9166, p. 3, Ministry of Reconstruction *Women's Housing Sub-Committee Terms of Reference*. For a discussion of the meaning of the term 'housewife' in the 1920s, see Giles, 'A Home of One's Own'.

<sup>47.</sup> TNA, RECO 1/634, unidentified cutting.

<sup>48.</sup> McFarlane, 'Homes Fit for Heroines', p. 27.

<sup>49.</sup> London, Imperial War Museum, *The Women at Work Collection*, EMP 46, 6, *Women's Labour League leaflet, 'The Working Woman's House: Woman's Chief Task is to Make a Home'* (1918); Rowan, 'Women in the Labour Party'; Hunt, 'Gendering the Politics'.

<sup>50.</sup> TNA, RECO 1/631, A. Sanderson Furniss, 'Report of

Enquiry Conducted by Women in the Labour Party,' 19 June 1918.

<sup>51.</sup> Ibid. For other published summaries, see A.D. Sanderson Furniss, 'The Working Woman's House', in M. Philips, ed., *Women and the Labour Party* (London, 1918), pp. 74–85; A.D. Sanderson Furniss, *The Homes of the People: An Elementary Text Book on Housing* (Oxford, 1925), p. 18.

<sup>52.</sup> TNA, RECO/1/631, Women's Housing Sub-Committee notes, 28 Feb. 1918.

<sup>53.</sup> TNA, RECO 1/631, Mrs Mills to Lady Emmott, 14 June 1918.

<sup>54.</sup> TNA, RECO/1/623, Edith Whiting to Miss Gwyer, Leeds Women's Citizens Association, 1 May 1918.

<sup>55.</sup> TNA, RECO 1/631, 'Women's Sub-Committee', 26 Feb. 1918.

<sup>56.</sup> TNA, RECO 1/623, Miss Leach to Miss Gwyer, Leeds Women Citizens' League, 1 May 1918.

<sup>57.</sup> The interim report was published in May, but had been completed by April. See TNA, RECO 1/630, Women's Housing Sub-Committee Minutes, 22 Apr. 1918.

<sup>58.</sup> On this point, see J. Lawrence, 'The Transformation of British Politics after the First World War', *Past and Present*, no. 190 (2006), pp. 185–216.

<sup>59.</sup> For an overview of historical debates concerned with the origins and character of 'new' or 'welfare' feminism, see K. Cowman, *Women in British Politics, 1690–1979* (London 2010), pp. 151–2.

<sup>60.</sup> Both Rowan and Hunt noted a similar acceptance of the gendered division of domestic labour by the Women's Labour League. See Rowan, 'Women in the Labour Party', pp. 83–4, 89; Hunt, 'Gendering the Politics', p. 109.

<sup>61.</sup> Furniss, 'The Working Woman's House', p. 74; Women's Housing Sub-Committee First Interim Report, para. 2.

<sup>62.</sup> Women's Housing Sub-Committee Final Report, para. 11.

<sup>63.</sup> TNA, RECO 1/630, Mrs Barton to Committee, 22 Mar. 1918.

<sup>64.</sup> TNA, RECO 1/630, Women's Housing Sub-Committee Minutes, 18 June 1918.

<sup>65.</sup> TNA, RECO 1/630, Report of discussion on housing with the mothers of the Barton Hill Mothers' School.

<sup>66.</sup> Women's Housing Sub-Committee Final Report, para. 11.

<sup>67.</sup> TNA, RECO 1/630, Report by Mrs Peel and Mrs Furniss on the architect's plans sent out for the RIBA competition of cottage plans, 28 Mar. 1918.

<sup>68.</sup> TNA, RECO 1/631, Notes on Interior Arrangements by Mrs Guy.

<sup>69.</sup> TNA, RECO 1/631, Women's Housing Sub-Committee Minutes, 24 May 1918.

<sup>70.</sup> TNA, RECO 1/631, Report of Visit to Bournville Village Trust Estate.

<sup>71.</sup> TNA, RECO 1/631, Women's Housing Sub-Committee Minutes, 31 May 1918.

<sup>72.</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 Apr. 1918.

<sup>73.</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 June 1918.

<sup>74.</sup> TNA RECO 1/631, Report of Meeting held by Miss Maud Bell at Camberwell.

<sup>75.</sup> TNA, RECO 1/631, Copy of Resolution passed at a Conference on Housing held at Hanley Town Hall, 20 Apr. 1918.

<sup>76.</sup> TNA, RECO 1/631, Discussion on Housing with the Mothers of the Barton Hill Mother's School; TNA, RECO 1/623, Leeds Women Citizen's League report on 'Houses Women Want'.

<sup>77.</sup> Women's Housing Sub-Committee Final Report, para. 49.

<sup>78.</sup> M. Llewellyn, 'Designed by Women and Designing Women: Gender, Planning and the Geographies of the Kitchen in Britain, 1917–1946', *Cultural Geographies*, xi (2004), p. 45.

<sup>79.</sup> Mrs C.S. Peel, *The Labour Saving House* (London, 1917), p. 26.

<sup>80.</sup> Peel, *The Labour Saving House*, p. 26.

<sup>81.</sup> J. Lane-Claypon, *Hygiene of Women and Children* (London, 1921), p. 3.

<sup>82.</sup> Lane-Claypon, *Hygiene*, p. 4.

<sup>83.</sup> Sanderson Furniss and Phillips, *The Working Woman's House*, p. 35.

<sup>84.</sup> TNA, RECO 1/631, Discussion on Housing with the Mothers of the Barton Hill Mothers' School.

<sup>85.</sup> Women's Housing Sub-Committee First Interim Report, para. 12.

<sup>86.</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 13.

<sup>87.</sup> TNA, RECO 1/631, Leeds Women Citizens' League Report on 'Houses Women Want'; Women's Housing Sub-Committee Final Report, para. 98.

<sup>88.</sup> TNA, RECO 1/631, Notes of the Local Government Board on the First Interim Report of the Ministry of Reconstruction Women's Housing Sub-Committee, Clause 13.

<sup>89.</sup> TNA, RECO 1/630, Women's Housing Sub-Committee Minutes, 24 May 1918.

<sup>90.</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 June 1918.

<sup>91.</sup> Women's Housing Sub-Committee Final Report, para. 18.

<sup>92.</sup> Sanderson Furniss, *Homes of the People*, p. 45.

<sup>93.</sup> Sanderson Furniss, 'The Working Woman's House', p. 82.

<sup>94.</sup> *Municipal Journal*, 18 Oct. 1918; Sanderson Furniss, 'The Working Woman's House', p. 77.

<sup>95.</sup> TNA, RECO 1/631, Notes of the Local Government Board on the First Interim Report of the Ministry of Reconstruction Women's Housing Sub-Committee, Clause 7.

<sup>96.</sup> Sanderson Furniss and Phillips, *The Working Woman's House*, p. 29.

<sup>97.</sup> TNA, RECO 1/631, Women's Housing Sub-Committee Minutes, 28 June 1918.

<sup>98.</sup> Lady Bell, *At The Works*, cited in C. Buckley, 'Modernity, Tradition and the Design of the "Industrial Village" of Dormanstown, 1917–1923', *Journal of Design History*, xxiii (2010), p. 37. On the importance of the wake in working-class households, see also J.M. Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870–1914* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 87–91.

<sup>99.</sup> TNA, RECO 1/631, Report of Meeting by Miss Maud Bell at Camberwell.

<sup>100.</sup> TNA, RECO 1/631, Report of the Women's Conference at Chesterfield, 4 Nov. 1918; TNA, RECO 1/631, 'Notes on Interviews etc During Birmingham Visit'.

<sup>101.</sup> TNA, RECO 1/631, Women's Housing Sub-Committee Minutes, 19 June 1918.

<sup>102.</sup> *Municipal Journal*, 18 Oct. 1918.

<sup>103.</sup> J. Hamlett, "The Dining Room Should Be the Man's Paradise as the Drawing Room is the Woman's": Gender and Middle-Class Domestic Space in England, 1850–1910', *Gender and History*, xxi (2009), p. 582; D. Cohen, *Household*

Gods: The British and their Possessions (New Haven, CT, 2006).

<sup>104.</sup> Hamlett, 'The Dining Room', p. 582.

<sup>105.</sup> Sanderson Furniss and Phillips, *The Working Woman's House*, p. 19.

<sup>106.</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>107.</sup> [↩](#) The Housing Journal: Organ of the Labour Housing Association, no. 120 (1920).

<sup>108.</sup> R. Thompson, 'The House the People Need', *Housing Journal*, Special Plans Issue (1920).

<sup>109.</sup> Sanderson Furniss, *The Homes of the People*, p. 46.

<sup>110.</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>111.</sup> S. Pedersen, 'The Failure of Feminism in the Making of the British Welfare State', *Radical History Review*, lviii (1989), p. 100.

<sup>112.</sup> See McFarlane, 'Homes Fit for Heroines', pp. 30–31.

<sup>113.</sup> A. Ravetz and R. Turkington, *The Place of Home: English Domestic Environments, 1914–2000* (London, 1996) p. 150.

<sup>114.</sup> Swenarton, *Homes Fit for Heroes*, pp. 92, 97.

<sup>115.</sup> *Women's Housing Sub-Committee Final Report*; see also Swenarton, *Homes Fit for Heroes*; McFarlane, 'Homes Fit for Heroines'; E. Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City* (London, 1991), p. 104.

<sup>116.</sup> See, for example, Johnson, *Land Fit for Heroes*.

<sup>117.</sup> R. Strachey, *The Cause* (London, 1928), p. 367.

<sup>118.</sup> *Labour Woman*, Mar. 1920.

<sup>119.</sup> *Ibid.*, Aug. 1922; 'To the Woman in the Home', *Labour Party Leaflets*, new ser., no. 9 (1918), available on Harvester Press microfiche, *The Archives of the British Labour Party. Series II: Pamphlets and Leaflets of the Labour Representation Committee, 1900–06, and the Labour Party since 1906* [hereafter BLP], fiche 1918/49.

<sup>120.</sup> 'Why Women Should Join the Labour Party', *Labour Party Leaflets*, new ser., no. 3 (1918), BLP, fiche 1918/60.

<sup>121.</sup> *Labour Woman*, Mar. 1920.

<sup>122.</sup> On the importance of local studies to an understanding of women's politics in the inter-war period see J. Hannam, "'Making Areas Strong for Socialism and Peace": Labour Women and Radical Politics in Bristol, 1906–1939', in K. Cowman and I. Packer, eds., *Radical Cultures and Local*

Identities (Newcastle, 2010), pp. 71–94. Suggestions for how to take this idea further are made in K. Hunt and J. Hannam, 'Towards an Archaeology of Interwar Women's Politics', in Gottlieb and Toye, eds., *Aftermath*, pp. 124–41.

<sup>123.</sup> H. Morrison, 'Better Times for the Housewife', Labour Party Leaflet (1923), BLP, fiche 1923/50.

<sup>124.</sup> S. Henderson, 'A Revolution in the Woman's Sphere: Grete Lihotzky and the Frankfurt Kitchen', in D. Coleman, E. Danze and C. Henderson, eds., *Architecture and Feminism* (New York, 1996), pp. 221–53.

<sup>125.</sup> Morrison, 'Better Times for the Housewife'.

<sup>126.</sup> Ravetz, 'A View from the Interior', p. 196. See also Rowan, 'Women in the Labour Party', pp. 83–4; Hunt, 'Gendering the Politics', pp. 112–14.

<sup>127.</sup> Mrs C.S. Peel, 'Changes in the Home: Housekeepers but Also Citizens', *Daily Mail*, 31 Oct. 1919; J. Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History* (Cambridge, MA, 2007), pp. 181–3.

<sup>128.</sup> Peel, 'Changes in the Home'.

<sup>129.</sup> Rowan, 'Women in the Labour Party', p. 83.

<sup>130.</sup> Women's Housing Sub-Committee Final Report, para. 70.

<sup>131.</sup> *Labour Woman*, Feb. 1918.

<sup>132.</sup> Sanderson Furniss and Phillips, *The Working Woman's House*, p. 49.

<sup>133.</sup> Hunt and Hannam, 'Towards an Archaeology', p.

<sup>134.</sup> For examples of this in the 1930s, see Manchester Women's History Group, 'Ideology in Bricks and Mortar', p. 40.

<sup>134.</sup> D. Thackeray, 'From Prudent Housewife to Empire Shopper: Appeals to the Female Voter, 1918–28', in Gottlieb and Toye, eds., *Aftermath*, p. 38. For further comparative details, see Cowman, *Women in British Politics*, ch. 8.

<sup>135.</sup> E. Glanville, 'Ourselves under the Socialists: The Woman's Part ... What of our Homes?', *Home and Politics*, Sept. 1920.

<sup>136.</sup> Anon., 'The Home, The Children and Politics', *Home and Politics*, Aug. 1921.

<sup>137.</sup> 'Over the Garden Wall: Mrs Brown and Labour Party Promises', Conservative Party Leaflet (1923), available on Harvester Press microfiche, Archives of the British Conservative Party. Series I: Pamphlets and Leaflets, 1923/163.

<sup>138.</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139.</sup> On this point see D. Jarvis, 'Mrs Maggs and Betty: The Conservative Appeal to Women Voters in the 1920s', *Twentieth Century British History*, v (1994), p. 141.

<sup>140.</sup> Anon., 'The Value of the Home', *Home and Politics*, June 1921.

<sup>141.</sup> A. Keightley, 'House Decoration and Furnishing', *Women's Employment*, Jan. 1920.

<sup>142.</sup> Cohen, *Household Gods*, p. 105.

<sup>143.</sup> Anon., 'Home, House and Dress', *Home and Politics*, Sept. 1923.

<sup>144.</sup> TNA, RECO 1/633, Report of meeting on housing convened by Southall Women's Liberal Association, 11 Jan. 1919.

<sup>145.</sup> *Liberal Women's News*, Jan. 1925.

<sup>146.</sup> Ibid., Feb. 1925.

<sup>147.</sup> Ibid., Jan. 1925.

<sup>148.</sup> See Beaumont, 'Where to Park the Pram', p. 92, which cautions against interpreting women's involvement in housing campaigns in the 1930s as representing their being 'rendered passive and powerless by the conservative forces of domesticity'.

<sup>149.</sup> Hannam and Hunt, 'Towards an Archaeology'.

<sup>150.</sup> Beaumont, 'Where to Park the Pram'.