

Department of Humanities, Northumbria University

Honours Dissertation

Peace Activism and Women's Politics:

Women Strike for Peace in Context, 1961–1972

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List of Abbreviations

SANE	National Committee for a SANE Nuclear Policy
SDS	Students for a Democratic Society
SNCC	Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WSP	Women Strike for Peace

Introduction

Female peace activists campaigned alongside other radical groups in the Sixties, reflecting a growing discontent with both the testing of nuclear weapons and the Vietnam War. With 16,300 American personnel in Vietnam in 1964, followed by the rapid increase to 132,300 a year later and the ensuing escalation of military hostilities, the anti-war movement gained momentum.¹ There were a number of women's groups that opposed the war, including Voice of Women and Another Mother for Peace.² This dissertation will focus upon two organisations, Women Strike for Peace (WSP) and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), both of which attracted substantial public attention. The central theme of this dissertation is the impact female activists had upon other women and on the anti-war movement, rather than their relationship with American policy. Of the two organisations in question, the principal focus will be upon WSP, which cemented its place as one of the leading American peace organisations of the Sixties with its first demonstration in November 1961. At its foundation, the organisation's main aim was disarmament. However, as a standing joke circulating the Washington headquarters at the time admitted: 'a not so funny thing happened to us on the way to disarmament – the Vietnam War.'³ Their ongoing prominence in the peace movement was epitomised by the election of their fellow activist, Bella Abzug, to the House of Representatives in 1971.

Among the plethora of texts on the US's involvement in South East Asia, only a fraction focuses on the peace movement, and even fewer on women's participation in it. The historian David Cortright for instance, accurately points out that the Vietnam anti-war movement was the 'largest, most sustained, and most powerful peace movement in human history.'⁴ However, like many other

¹ David Levy, *The Debate Over Vietnam* (Second Edition, London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 124.

² Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *Peace Now!: American Society and the Ending of the Vietnam War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 157; Harriet Hyman Alonso, *Peace as a Women's Issue: A History of the U.S. Movement for World Peace and Civil Rights* (Syracuse University Press: New York, 1993), p. 201.

³ Amy Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 129.

⁴ David Cortright, *Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 157.

historians engaging with this topic, he focuses primarily on student activists, with scarce mention of women.⁵ By contrast, this dissertation stresses how women formed an essential part of the peace movement. It will demonstrate how peace activism helped to politicise women and how it was entwined with expressions of a feminist consciousness.

Former WSP member and historian, Amy Swerdlow, has produced the most extensive material on WSP. Her insight covers a wide range of aspects of the organisation, and she traces the progression of WSP women throughout the years. She explains how they were quickly forced to educate themselves on foreign policy, due to the urgency of the Vietnam issue. She also alludes to the fact that the war energised many of the women's political thoughts and admits that 'WSP not only enhanced my sense of political and personal worth, it eventually sparked my interest in feminism'.⁶ Similarly, Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones highlights that women's political and legislative means of protest enabled them to legitimise themselves in politics.⁷ Harriet Alonso alludes to WSP's discontent with the hierarchical structure of WILPF, which forced them to adopt new structures and methods.⁸ Nina Adams's research has further expanded on this issue; she identifies certain features of the wider peace movement, which made women aware of the institutionalised sexism within the political organisations of the day, such as Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).⁹ An increased realisation of their own repression and a heightened consciousness led them to the creation of all-women organisations.¹⁰ Adams suggests that WSP attracted many who were dissatisfied with the wider anti-war movement, increasing the potential for feminism within the organisation. Andrea Estepa

⁵See also Melvin Small, 'The Peace Movement on the Campuses', in Robert McMahon, *Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War: Documents and Essays* (Fourth Edition, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), pp. 416-421; Michael Heale, *The Sixties in America: History, Politics and Protest* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), pp. 132-148. Melvin Small and William Hoover (eds.), *Give Peace a Chance: Exploring the Vietnam Anti-War Movement* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1992). In a chapter on the anti-war movement's 'Intersections and Relationships with Other Movements', Simon Hall includes some remarks on links to the women's movement: Simon Hall, *Rethinking the American Antiwar Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 107-110.

⁶ Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 1.

⁷ Jeffreys-Jones, *Peace Now!*, p. 144.

⁸ Alonso, *Peace as a Women's Issue*, p. 202.

⁹ Nina S. Adams, 'The Women Who Left Them Behind', in Melvin Small and William Hoover (eds), *Give Peace a Chance: Exploring the Vietnam Anti-War Movement* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1992), p. 185.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 185.

specifically identifies the culmination of social upheavals in 1967 as the turning point which drew WSP women towards a political stance that combined feminism, pacifism and a commitment to civil rights.¹¹ These historians allude to various elements which contributed to the changing mentalities of women in the movement. They have laid the foundations for this dissertation, which will expand upon their work by exploring the development of WSP.

Existing scholarship often focuses on the individual women within WSP and WILPF. The extent to which these women were representative of the general female population has been questioned and criticised by various historians. Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, for instance, strictly categorise the women in both as a very distinct section of the peace movement, who were 'older and more moderate'.¹² Estepa even suggests that in their first few years as an organisation, WSP sought to recruit only white women, so as not to confuse their objectives with the question of civil rights.¹³ However, an exploration of how the organisations utilised these features to their advantage will indicate potential justifications for this narrow membership. Furthermore, an analysis of Bella Abzug's contributions to the organisation, particularly her ability to unite people through drawing links between peace and women's rights, will ascertain how these representation issues were overcome. Abzug's influence and character is a matter of some debate among historians. Swerdlow alludes to Abzug's fundamental impact by dedicating a whole chapter to her entitled 'Politics', thus shedding light upon the political nature of her influence on WSP.¹⁴ Jeffrey Bloodworth has further suggested that her 'political instincts and agenda' were not fully appreciated in her first few years as a leader of WSP.¹⁵ Contrastingly, in his book *Congressional Women*, Irwin Gertzog criticises her

¹¹ Andrea Estepa, 'Taking the White Gloves Off: Women Strike for Peace and "the Movement," 1967-73' in Stephanie Gilmore (eds.), *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), p. 93.

¹² Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?: American Protest Against the War in Vietnam 1963-1975* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1985), p. 145. See also Jenna Loyd, 'Peace is Our Only Shelter: Questioning Domesticities of Militarization and White Privilege', *Antipode*, vol. 43, no. 3 (2011).

¹³ Estepa, 'Taking the White Gloves Off', p. 91.

¹⁴ Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, pp. 143-157.

¹⁵ Jeffrey Bloodworth, *Losing the Center: The Decline of American Liberalism, 1968-1992* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2013), p. 159.

agenda and attitude within the House of Representatives.¹⁶ Rather than assessing Abzug's career more generally, this dissertation concentrates on Abzug's impact from the perspective of WSP, which involves an analysis of her ability to press for withdrawal from Vietnam, and her contribution to the politicisation of other women.

In order to consider the relationship between activism and politicisation, it is important to understand the workings and experiences of WSP. This shall be done in Chapter One through a comparison of this organisation with WILPF. It will demonstrate the speed with which WSP developed and ultimately consider the question: how unique was WSP? A comparison of the motivations and commitments of WILPF and WSP will therefore be necessary. The extent to which their aims were realistic and centred upon the Vietnam War will be answered throughout this dissertation.

Chapter Two will expand upon the experiences of WILPF and WSP, examining the nature of their tactics and identifying to what extent they diverted from the strategies of mainstream anti-war organisations. Initially, it appears that WILPF were better equipped to prepare publications and able to utilise their political contacts more effectively.¹⁷ WSP used explicitly feminine tactics, identifying itself at the outset as an organisation of concerned mothers. Taking this into consideration, emphasis will be placed upon the extension of WSP tactics. Indeed, these women eventually utilised diverse methods and took on alternative personas in order to address different circumstances and challenges, and this intends to demonstrate the rate at which they developed. The discussion of these developments will also support the argument that peace activism raised the political consciousness of American women. Thus, measuring the success of women in the peace movement

¹⁶ Irwin Gertzog, *Congressional Women: Their Recruitment, Integration and Behaviour* (London: Praeger, 1995), pp. 171-177.

¹⁷ Dorothy Hutchinson, 'Proposal for an Honourable Peace in Vietnam', 20 Mar 1964, in *microfilm records of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom 1915-1978*, Faculty of ADSS at Northumbria University (thereafter: *MF WILPF*), reel 96.

will not only consider the impact they had upon the administration, but the impact they had upon themselves.

This dissertation will extend its focus up to 1972 and emphasises the importance of Bella Abzug when studying the political role of women during the era of anti-war protests. Chapter Three examines Abzug's relationship with WSP and with her colleagues in Congress. Swerdlow recalls how there were two unofficial leaders of WSP: Dagmar Wilson, who was the figurehead and spokesperson, and Abzug who with 'her much admired and respected oratory provided leadership from the beginning'.¹⁸ Abzug represents the second half of the movement for WSP: the raising of political consciousness, which was an important long-term effect of WSP's activism. Moreover, a focus upon Abzug's time in the House allows for an assessment of her commitment to WSP at a time when she had many other pressures upon her. The extension of her commitments included women's rights, which raises speculation over whether feminism distracted her from WSP's main cause, withdrawal from Vietnam. Accordingly, the final chapter will focus upon a select period of Abzug's political activism, from her time as leader of WSP to her first two years in Congress.

This dissertation draws upon a range of primary sources. For the information gathered on WSP, a great deal is owed to Amy Swerdlow. Although she insists that her account is purely historical and 'not a memoir of a participant observer', her analysis is evidently subjective.¹⁹ Aspects of the text clearly reflect her individual experience. Whilst this allows a more detailed insight into WSP, one must also be aware that her analysis may be clouded by nostalgia and fond memories. In order to compare and contrast WSP with WILPF, Chapters One and Two rely heavily upon the microfilm records of WILPF, which capture and reveal the extensive contacts and the methods used by the organisation.²⁰ Chapter Two aims to engage with the opinions of outside observers, as well as WSP women, in order to gauge their overall impact on the US. For this reason, a variety of newspaper and

¹⁸ Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 54.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 1.

²⁰ *MF WILPF*, reel 96.

magazine articles have been consulted. The Peace Collection at Swarthmore College has aided my research of WSP campaigns and protests, having granted access to various images and articles from their Women Strike for Peace Records.²¹ Chapter Three has benefitted even more so from this set of sources as well as Bella Abzug's published diary of 1971 and 1972.²² The combination of this material, alongside an oral history composed by Suzanne Braun Levine and Mary Thom, allows for a balanced review of Abzug's impact upon WSP and the US House of Representatives.²³

Ultimately, this dissertation assesses women's participation in the peace movement through the prism of WSP. It will measure the extent to which its experiences and contact with others in the movement politicized women. WSP's presence was requested at the retirement of Secretary General of the United Nations, General U Thant, where Abzug was asked to give a speech. Abzug reflected upon WSP's growth in her diary on this day: 'Most of us didn't know each other. We didn't even have a name for our group yet...now here we are several hundred women this morning, older and wiser.'²⁴ This concept of development and growth will be explored in detail in the three chapters. They will trace the journey of a group of women who, on initially deciding to focus on their maternal argument, and who were reluctant to mention even the economic implications of the war, transformed into a group of politically engaged activists chanting 'two, four, six, eight-tell 'em Bella set the date' at Abzug's inauguration, whilst holding plaques saying 'Give 'em Hell Bella'.²⁵

²¹ *Women Strike for Peace Records 1961-1996*, Swarthmore College Peace Collection (thereafter: *WSPR*).

²² Bella Abzug, *Bella! Ms Abzug Goes to Washington: Edited by Mel Ziegler* (New York: Saturday Review Press, 1972).

²³ Suzanne Braun Levine and Mary Thom, *Bella Abzug :How One Tough Broad from the Bronx Fought Jim Crow and Joe McCarthy, Pissed off Jimmy Carter, Battled for the Rights of Women and Workers, Rallied Against War and for the Planet, and Shook Up Politics Along the Way* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008).

²⁴ Abzug, *Bella!*, p. 291.

²⁵ Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 154 and p. 164. See also Dorothy Marder, 'Bella Abzug's Inauguration', in Photographs of Dorothy Marder, 21 Jan 1971, accessed via http://www.swarthmore.edu/Library/peace/Exhibits/Dorothy%20Marder/MarderExhibit1A_files/MarderExhibit1A.html [last accessed 27 April 2015].

The Place of WSP and WILPF Within a Wider Movement

To begin with, it is imperative to explore the workings of WSP. One key source in this context is Amy Swerdlow's *Women Strike for Peace*, which provides a thorough insight into the structure and workings of WSP.²⁶ The present chapter compares WSP's features with those of WILPF. This approach promises to be particularly enlightening due to the fact that the former was supposedly born as a more democratic alternative to the latter. The two organisations overlapped, not only in their aims, but also in their membership; many women remained members of both WILPF and WSP.²⁷ Despite the expression of almost parallel concerns over America's foreign policy in the Sixties, there are many striking differences that exist between the two, and the present chapter will address them. The political and social backgrounds of the women in both WSP and WILPF are important in understanding how women fitted into the wider Sixties' peace movement in America. Furthermore, the obvious difference – the experience levels of the two organisations – must be discussed in order to comprehend the formation of WSP, and to make sense of the development of both groups as they campaigned throughout the era.

History

WILPF can trace its origins back to the International Women's Congress at The Hague of 1915, whereas WSP was not founded until 1961. Therefore, at the beginning of the 1960s, the experience levels of the organisations differed quite clearly. WILPF could look back on a long history of campaigning for peace. For instance, during World War Two, Dorothy Hutchinson – who later became President of the US section – became one of the founders of the 'Peace Now' Movement.²⁸

WILPF's extensive experiences were applied to subsequent campaigns against the Vietnam War. In a

²⁶ Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 50; Alonso, *Peace as a Women's Issue*, p. 211.

²⁸ Catia Cecilia Confortini, *Intelligent Compassion: Feminist Clinical Methodology in the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 36.

1967 pamphlet, it claimed that fifty years prior, their efforts for mediation had won the support of several leaders, with the exception of President Woodrow Wilson.²⁹ This was effectively a ploy to pressure the United States to avoid isolating itself, by denouncing its recurrent unwillingness to negotiate on matters of peace. Moreover, many WILPF women had held positions in and served as delegates to the League of Nations on a number of occasions. For instance, Dr Gertrud Bäumer served as technical adviser to the German delegation in the 1920s, and Alice Hamilton of the US section was a member of the Health Committee for six years.³⁰ Such experiences undoubtedly enhanced WILPF's ability to comprehend foreign policy. Hence, upon the retirement of Secretary General U Thant in 1966, the women seized the opportunity to praise his views which denounced military intervention in Vietnam as a 'tragic error.'³¹ They further stated that his retirement gave this opinion 'added poignancy.'³² WILPF's experience and international formation also meant that their global contacts exceeded WSP's. People from other countries would approach WILPF for information on the war. For instance, in March 1968, many Danish women requested copies of Dorothy Hutchinson's *Proposal for an Honourable Peace* in order to join in the protest.³³ This international system worked both ways as the US branch of WILPF often received information about the Vietnam War which they did not get at home, via communicating with the Australian branch.³⁴ In contrast, many WSP members were housewives with no relevant contacts. This cannot, however, be said for all the women of the organisation; indeed Eleanor Garst, Folly Fodor, Margaret Russell and Jean Bagby had all been members of the National Committee for Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE) upon joining WSP, and therefore had existing contacts with political figures and other activists. However,

²⁹ Rebecca Shelly, 'To Government and People of Neutral Non-Aligned Nations', 1967, in *MF WILPF*, reel 96.

³⁰ Karen Offen, *European Feminisms 1750–1950: A Global History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 349; Gertrude Bussey and Margaret Tims, *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1965), p. 74.

³¹ Women's International League for Peace and Freedom US Branch, 'Study on Strengthening the United Nations', Oct 1966, in *MF WILPF*, reel 96.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Elisabeth Stahe, Letter to Nan Hanson, 8 Mar 1968, in *MF WILPF*, reel 96.

³⁴ Joyce Blackwell, *No Peace Without Freedom: Race and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1915-1975* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004), p. 35.

Dagmar Wilson, founder and spokeswoman for WSP, was a successful book illustrator with no activist experience, who despite her success identified herself primarily as a wife and mother.³⁵

WSP's inexperience may appear as a significant weakness when compared to WILPF's history, yet it could also enabled WSP activists to make claims about their distinctness. Amy Swerdlow makes this point whilst describing her first encounter with Gertrude Baer, one of the founders of WILPF, at the Geneva conference in 1962. She admits her own ignorance, firstly by denouncing the occupation and background of WILPF women: 'The fact that Baer was a professional peace bureaucrat in Geneva concerned with laws, conventions and resolutions gave her less value in my eyes.'³⁶ Swerdlow goes on to state: 'We saw ourselves as new, bold and potentially successful. We believed we could accomplish what the WILPF had failed to do [during World War Two.]'³⁷ Although individuals may have shared and acknowledged this mind-set in the early years, as an organisation they took every opportunity to develop and learn. All branches of WSP undertook study programmes, which eventually lead to hundreds of pieces of literature being published, such as Miriam Levin's *The Story of Disarmament*.³⁸ The women themselves also became more politically interested as they educated themselves. Amy Swerdlow alludes to her sense of excitement in making political decisions within WSP, by referring to these as 'heady experiences', which eventually ignited her interest in feminism.³⁹ Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones similarly asserts that, although WSP as an organisation did not initially fit into a political framework, it supplied a 'generation of women with political training', thus enhancing WSP's effectiveness.⁴⁰ Ultimately, whilst both began new campaigns in the Sixties, WILPF had the advantage of experience, whilst WSP women overcame their disadvantages through perseverance and education.

³⁵ Alonso, *Peace as a Women's Issue*, p. 202.

³⁶ Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 9.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 9.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 80.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 9.

⁴⁰ Jeffreys-Jones, *Peace Now!*, p. 155.

The Women

In order to understand how the two organisations operated, one must identify these female activists as individuals, and thereupon discover what set them apart from other members of the wider peace movement. Peace activists of the 1960s are often remembered as youthful students who were rebelling against the administration, not as the mature women who associated themselves with WILPF and WSP. As already stated, Zaroulis and Sullivan distinguish these women from the rest of the movement as 'old' and 'moderate'.⁴¹ Furthermore, it is acknowledged by a number of academics, for instance Catherine Foster, that both WILPF and WSP contained mostly white, middle or upper class women.⁴² One logical explanation for this similarity is that many WSP local organisers met through WILPF.⁴³ Newspapers of the era, such as the *Washington Post*, viewed the initial WSP strike of 1961, which involved a diverse array of organisations, favourably in comparison to other protesters. One image of the protest was captioned 'out for lunch', as the strike took place in the middle of the day, and most participants identified themselves simply as concerned mothers.⁴⁴ This also illustrates that the typical demonstrators were wealthy housewives who could afford not to work, and mothers who stayed at home to look after their children.⁴⁵ This image was maintained in the media by the 'Washington housewife' and strike coordinator, Dagmar Wilson, throughout the decade.⁴⁶ Contrastingly, however, many women of WILPF identified themselves as 'a group of prominent American women' and actively political figures, much more like men.⁴⁷ Middle or upper class housewives were evidently valued members of WSP because of their abundance of time and money, which enabled them to travel and campaign. Nevertheless, in reality many WILPF women

⁴¹ Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?*, p. 11.

⁴² Catherine Foster, *Women for All Seasons: The Story of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom* (Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1989), p. 3; Loyd, 'Peace is Our Only Shelter', p. 847; Frances Early, review of Carrie A. Foster, *The Women and the Warriors: The U.S. Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom 1915-1946*, in *Peace & Change*, vol. 22, no. 1 (1997), p. 96.

⁴³ Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 234.

⁴⁴ Mary Smith, 'For and About Women: 500 Women Picket for Peace', *The Washington Post*, 2 November 1961.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Joseph Hearst, 'Group Open To Reds, Says Peace Striker: All Are Welcome, Probers Told', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 14 Dec 1962; Lawrence Wittner, 'Gender Roles and Nuclear Disarmament Activism, 1954-1965', *Gender & History*, vol. 12, no. 1 (2000), p. 206.

⁴⁷ Marther Molarsky, Newsletter, 11 Jan 1967, in *MF WILPF*, reel 96.

also benefitted from these privileges. Rebecca Shelly, for instance, journeyed around the world as a representative of WILPF, in order to promote an 'international commission for neutral mediation to end the war in Vietnam'.⁴⁸ Evidently, without wealth, many women like Shelly would not have had the freedom to have been quite so independently active within the organisation. This key aspect correlates the two organisations.

Representation

In spite of the time, wealth and dedication, middle-class housewives were able to contribute to campaigning, it did not go unnoticed that women from both organisations lacked the ability to represent the wider female population. Very few working-class women were involved in the organisation: 65 percent of WSP's members had college degrees, in contrast to 6.8 percent of women in the nation as a whole.⁴⁹ One reason for working-class underrepresentation was that most WSP meetings were held on weekday mornings, preventing the majority of working women, and those who could not afford childcare from attending.⁵⁰ This factor also prevented college students from participating. The only contact women's organisations had with the students in the peace movement was at mass rallies. Meanwhile, young people's growing role in the political arena made WILPF question their lack of young representation.⁵¹ By the late 1960s, WSP women were also aware that they could not represent a cross section of American women without young, working-class or black women. They therefore began to recruit them from other constituencies, as exemplified by Lorraine Thomas from NAACP.⁵² WILPF, by contrast, noticed the need for multiethnic representation almost a decade earlier. Consequently, between 1955 and 1975 more than fifty African American women joined WILPF, including Diane Nash of the Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee

⁴⁸ Rebecca Shelly, Letter to Elizabeth Stahe, 19 Jun 1967, in *MF WILPF*, reel 96.

⁴⁹ Joyce Gelb, review of Amy Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s* in *Signs*, vol. 22, no. 1 (1996), p. 238.

⁵⁰ Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 76.

⁵¹ Blackwell, *No Peace Without Freedom*, p. 52.

⁵² Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 190; Estepa, 'Taking the White Gloves Off', p. 93.

(SNCC) and Coretta Scott King (Martin Luther King's wife).⁵³ Indeed, the diversity of women in both organisations grew in correlation with the increasing membership throughout the 1960s. Meanwhile, the membership of WILPF outside of America was dying off, and this suggests that it was 'US specific' issues and deliberate advertising by the American branch that drew women to join.⁵⁴ The organisation's efforts to recruit black and working-class women, partnered with increasing concerns over US involvement in Vietnam, propelled membership numbers. Even so, the women of WILPF and WSP remained only a small fraction of women in the US, due to the requirements of campaigning and the perception that they were the older faction of the peace movement.

Structure

WSP adopted a deliberately different structure to WILPF, one which proved innovative and influential among peace activists. WSP was an organisation born out of rejection of the ways other peace groups operated, including WILPF. One particular feature that they rejected was the latter's exclusion of communists. Dagmar Wilson was adamant that communists in WSP would not be kept from positions of leadership, in spite of investigations by the House of Un-American Activities.⁵⁵ This emphasises WSP's desire to unite everybody, and it shows that their stance on nuclear warfare and US involvement in Vietnam was more concerned with humanitarian issues than Cold War politics. WILPF, in contrast, was extremely careful whom it associated itself with. Despite the compliments they received from the newly established Tri-Continental Information Centre in 1967, alongside pleas that WILPF recognise them as partners in peace, WILPF made the decision to deliberately avoid them.⁵⁶ This decision was made upon the grounds that 'the tone' of their communications was 'ill-fitted' to WILPF's interests and stance on world affairs.⁵⁷ Harriet Alonso highlights how WILPF's

⁵³ Blackwell, *No Peace Without Freedom*, p. 145.

⁵⁴ Anne Plum, Letter to Eleanor Fowler, 5 Feb 1969, in *MF WILPF*, reel 96.

⁵⁵ Joseph Hearst, 'Group Open To Reds, Says Peace Striker: All Are Welcome, Probers Told', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 14 Dec 1962.

⁵⁶ Joe Graham, Letter to Elisabeth Stahe, 26 May 1967, in *MF WILPF*, reel 96.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

hierarchical structure was also rejected by WSP.⁵⁸ Indeed, Dagmar Wilson emphasised that WSP was a grassroots organisation which eliminated hierarchy and had no leaders. However, Amy Swerdlow recalls that the group did seem to form an 'informal leadership clique', as certain factors attributed to recognised leadership in WSP such as money to travel, friendship with founders and media recognition.⁵⁹ This suggests that hierarchy was not wholly eradicated in WSP, thus white, middle class housewives from the city, such as Dagmar Wilson, held more influence and power. Nevertheless, WSP prided itself in its supposed non-hierarchical structure, and emphasised cooperation as a team through an innovative telephone communication system between women across the United States.⁶⁰ Ethel Taylor, who had moved from WILPF to WSP, stated that 'if WILPF had been more dynamic, WSP would probably never have been born'.⁶¹ Thus, it does indeed appear that this structure was a product of dissatisfaction with WILPF.

However, it is also plausible that WSP may have been influenced by other grassroots organisations of the Sixties, including as SNCC and SDS, which also rejected hierarchy. Meanwhile, WILPF was not the only organisation that produced passionate WSP women. Various other women in WSP came from organisations with similar hierarchical structures, such as SANE and SDS. The latter managed to drive out women who felt marginalised by the sexist divisions of tasks, in which all the intellectual work was strictly considered a male's area of expertise.⁶² WSP further assured that it did not follow the examples of WILPF, by stating there was no official membership, no boards and no charging dues.⁶³ By contrast, WILPF membership came at a rate of 15 Swiss Francs.⁶⁴ Overall, the structure of WSP was ostensibly a rejection of existing peace organisations, including WILPF, via their membership terms and rejection of hierarchy. However, WSP did not completely succeed in opposing WILPF's hierarchical structure, as they were held back from the very aspects of their experience that urged

⁵⁸ Alonso, *Peace as a Women's Issue*, p. 202.

⁵⁹ Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 75.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 70.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 50.

⁶² Adams, 'The Women Who Left Them Behind', p. 188.

⁶³ Alonso, *Peace as a Women's Issue*, p. 204.

⁶⁴ Elizabeth Stahe, Letter to Miss Tara Gustto, 17 May 1968, in *MF WILPF*, reel 96.

them to reform the women's peace movement in the first place; their reliance on the wealthy housewife.

Aims and Objectives

It is also important to differentiate between specific arguments which drew these women to campaign, in order to completely understand their impact. WSP identified itself from the outset as a collaboration of concerned mothers: its members were mobilised into action by the detection of Strontium 90 in babies' milk, due to atmospheric testing of nuclear bombs.⁶⁵ In contrast, WILPF's concerns in the early stages of opposition to nuclear testing were more closely related to US foreign policy. They feared that production of nuclear weapons, paired with involvement in Vietnam, could lead to a confrontation with China, and ultimately a nuclear war.⁶⁶ As early as 1962, two years before the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, and before any US troops were sent to Vietnam, WILPF leader Annalee Stewart acknowledged that the US was taking on an undeclared war with Vietnam, thus demonstrating the initiative and a significant level of foreign policy knowledge within the organisation.⁶⁷

This distinction, however, of a maternal WSP, versus a politically engaged WILPF is by no means clear in all respects. By 1968, WSP had become more politically aware on an international level. This was demonstrated when WSP women entered the Mayor of Washington's office to lecture his secretary on sending out questionnaires 'in case of nuclear war', as they recognised that it was likely that peace talks with Vietnam could occur.⁶⁸ This acknowledgment of global politics and growth of knowledge is emphasised by the fact that WSP had 'alarmed' the Mayor's secretary with their observations.⁶⁹ It even demonstrates that they were more engaged than certain political officials with the impact of domestic policy abroad. Meanwhile, the newfound political angle of WSP's

⁶⁵ Catharine Stimpson, 'Foreword' in Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. x; Wittner, 'Gender Roles and Nuclear Disarmament Activism, 1954-1965', p. 206.

⁶⁶ Dorothy Hutchinson, 'Proposal for an Honourable Peace in Vietnam', 20 Mar 1964, in *MF WILPF*, reel 96.

⁶⁷ Alonso, *Peace as a Women's Issue*, p. 197.

⁶⁸ Carolyn Lewis, 'They Were All Active', *The Washington Post*, 27 Apr 1968.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

objectives evidently increased their influence among key figures. The crossover of aims between the two organisations is reiterated by the fact that WILPF shared specifically humanitarian concerns with WSP, as highlighted in WILPF's twelfth congress in 1953: they stated that they had made it their aim since World War Two to tackle the refugee problem around the world.⁷⁰ Their concern with refugees pinpoints the organisation's maternal concerns, whilst demonstrating widely humanitarian objectives. The congress, however, also revealed a wide array of different topics which WILPF concerned itself with, such as the stationing of foreign troops, racism and capital punishment.⁷¹ One of the advantages of this diversity is that they were able to link their issues to a wider cause. For instance, they reiterated their pleas of disarmament when reflecting on America's position in the world as the 'principal munitions supplier'.⁷² Nonetheless, their attention was divided and this hindered their input on American politics in the 1960s, whereas WSP was able to channel all of its time and energy towards inherently American issues. Although there was an overlap of concerns between the two, WILPF as an international organisation held an international perspective of peace issues, thus a broader focus. WILPF's campaigning against the Vietnam War, in particular, was undeniably not tailored directly as explicitly towards US agents of change.

Conclusion

This chapter has compared and contrasted WILPF and WSP, linked to the fact that WSP partly grew out of a disapproval of WILPF's aims and strategies. This helps to explain why both of these groups of women can be closely categorised together as the older, middle class and female branch of the wider movement. WSP's considered effort to be different was, not completely successful, due to the values they shared with WILPF women. These included the way in which both organisations valued, and were tailored to, women with money and time to offer. As a result, it was hard for WSP to eradicate hierarchy, a principle they were founded upon, as indicated by the formation of informal

⁷⁰ 'Resolutions Passed by the 12th Congress' in Theodore Brown and Elizabeth Fee, 'The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom', *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 94, no. 1 (2004), pp. 32-33.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 33.

⁷² Catherine Camp, Letter to Thomas E. Morgan, 3 Oct 1967, in *MF WILPF*, reel 96.

cliques and bands of leadership. The two organisations were not fully representative of American women, lacking black, young or working class women, yet both organisations' efforts to improve representation succeeded to a small extent. The formation of WSP as a new organisation also suffered the disadvantage of lacking activist experience and contacts, but they made up for this through hard work and mobilisation. This modernised group of peace activists had improved their knowledge and structures by the time it came to protest the war in Vietnam. WILPF had a more extensive network of contacts which most importantly meant they gained more information and were able to promote the anti-war cause worldwide, also working with the UN. However, WSP was in a position to affect more positive change within US borders than WILPF, due to their distinct national focus. Ultimately, WSP grew as an organisation throughout the Sixties, and eventually proved itself not only a worthy participant in the peace movement, but a more modernised and focused version of WILPF throughout the decade.

II

The Campaigning Methods of Militant Mothers

It is important to consider the variety of methods women used to campaign against the Vietnam War, in order to assess their impact upon both society and themselves. The formation of coalitions with Civil Rights and student activists was an important aspect of WSP campaigning, contributing to their influence within the wider peace movement. In time, WSP demonstrations became more imaginative and militant, with actions that were designed to shock the nation. This chapter examines where the women drew their inspiration from and it investigates how far their methods can be described as unique. A study of two specific campaigns, one against the draft and the other involving cooperation with Vietnamese women, both illuminate the common identity of female groups, and their deployment of an 'activists as mothers' strategy. Meanwhile, it is important to consider to what extent these campaigning methods were the cause of an increased political consciousness among women. Amy Swerdlow's account has helped to construct the overall argument, whilst newspaper articles are used to investigate the portrayal of these activities. The focus is on the campaigns which drew the greatest attention or had the greatest impact. Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones states that women 'made the final charge' after students and African Americans.⁷³ Although he is recognising that they legitimised the movement towards the end of the Sixties, it may not quite do the women's early efforts justice. The relative lack of secondary literature on this topic certainly does not. As a whole, this chapter will demonstrate the extent to which women deserve recognition for their innovative style and relentless determination in campaigning for peace.

⁷³ Jeffreys-Jones, *Peace Now!*, p. 143.

Coalition Building

Coalitions were a vital component of success in the peace movement, and women's groups were part of this from the very outset. WSP was born as a coalition with their 1961 Strike for Peace against nuclear testing. The strike brought together over 50,000 women from 59 cities and from various organisations, including WILPF.⁷⁴ This coalition extended beyond women, as some male religious figures were involved as well. For instance, in Chicago after the march, Rabbi Edgar Siskin gave a speech about the threat of nuclear war.⁷⁵ This religious representation undoubtedly added greater legitimacy to their cause, whilst clarifying that peace was not just a women's issue. The fact that Rabbi Siskin is mentioned in the *Chicago Times* demonstrates how both religious involvement and male involvement added legitimacy to the cause. Following this trend, WSP worked within the wider peace movement on a number of occasions. As Charles Chatfield has stated, the protests against the Vietnam War saw the 'largest and most tumultuous of peace coalitions'.⁷⁶ WSP certainly asserted their place among its leading organisations. Dagmar Wilson, for instance, made a speech to 100,000 activists on behalf of the WSP at the Lincoln Memorial in 1967.⁷⁷ Such involvement shows that WSP was a respected and key component of the overall peace coalition. Meanwhile, Danna Walker highlights how these vast numbers of participants often captured vital media attention.⁷⁸ The Fifth Avenue Peace Parade organised by WSP, SANE and WILPF also drew over 20,000 Americans; increased numbers were an obvious advantage of collaborating.⁷⁹ Furthermore, Amy Swerdlow

⁷⁴ Majorie Hunter, 'Arms Race Opposed', *New York Times*, 22 Nov 1961; Alonso, *Peace as a Women's Issue*, p. 205.

⁷⁵ 'Women Stage Peace Strike throughout US', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 2 Nov 1961.

⁷⁶ Charles Chatfield, 'Peace Movements' in Paul S Boyer, *The Oxford Companion to United States History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 584.

⁷⁷ Simon Hall, *Peace and Freedom: The Civil Rights and Anti-War Movements in the 1960s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), p. 126.

⁷⁸ Danna Walker, 'Donna Allen: Activist, Publisher, Educator, Thinker', *Media Report to Women*, vol. 32, no. 2 (2004), p. 8.

⁷⁹ Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?*, p. 55.

recalls WSP working closely with individual groups such as SANE, when setting up card tables providing draft information on sidewalks.⁸⁰

The most prominent coalition of the time was an all-women one, named after the first female congresswoman, Jeannette Rankin. The Jeannette Rankin Brigade not only brought WILPF and WSP women together: it attracted many women from churches and universities as well as welfare and Civil Rights groups.⁸¹ Their march on the Pentagon resulted in a delegation of fifteen women entering the building to present a fifteen-minute presentation. Among them were Civil Rights activists Coretta Scott King and Bobbie Hodges, a member of the Black Congress and Black Panther Parties.⁸² The historian Alice Echols states that the mix of women proved 'explosive.'⁸³ Indeed, this assortment of women presented a greater of arguments against the war, from race-specific arguments that black people should not be involved, to more general, or gender specific arguments.⁸⁴ Ultimately, the vast numbers generated by collaboration with other peace groups, alongside the diversity of the movement, exemplified the common aim of peace.

Creativity and Militancy

Women in the movement were able to communicate their point very clearly, often engaging in actions that were characterised by their creativity and imagination. They made the connection between death and war a reality through their use of costume and theatre. In Oakland, for example, on National Anti-Draft Day 1970, WSPers dressed in black and wore skeleton masks to conduct a death watch, personifying death to encourage the nation to recognise the link between death and the war.⁸⁵ WSP repeatedly staged such harrowing scenes. In 1972 they took part in Project Daily Death Toll (DDT) alongside the Fellowship of Reconciliation and the War Resisters League, in which

⁸⁰ Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 170.

⁸¹ Carolyn Lewis, 'After-March Action Planned by Brigade', *The Washington Post*, 13 Jan 1968.

⁸² Majorie Hunter, '5,000 Women Rally in Capital Against War', *New York Times*, 16 Jan 1968.

⁸³ Alice Echols, 'Women Power and Women's Liberation: Exploring the Relationship Between the Anti-war Movement and the Women's Liberation Movement' in Small and Hoover (eds.), *Give Peace a Chance*, p. 175.

⁸⁴ Majorie Hunter, '5,000 women rally in capital against war', *New York Times*, 16 Jan 1968.

⁸⁵ Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 171.

they performed die-ins by wearing a paper hat and the name of a dead Vietnamese, and laying on the ground.⁸⁶ WSP made sure these activities took place in busy areas, where they would inevitably cause disruption. Hence, lying outside the ITT skyscraper building ensured that maximum number of people on the many floors of the building would see them.⁸⁷ Although these methods were not distinctly feminine, as male activists staged similar actions, it demonstrates how women were willing to seize opportunities and put into practice both radical and creative ideas.

Moreover, as Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones has accurately stated, women in the movement were 'publicity capturing'.⁸⁸ The first of eight self-immolations in protest of the Vietnam War was by Alice Herz, an active member of both WSP and WILPF.⁸⁹ This method of protest was inspired by a Buddhist Monk, who carried out the act in 1963 to protest the oppressive rule of the US-backed South Vietnamese government.⁹⁰ Heavily documented in the press even years after it occurred, Herz is noted as the instigator of a chain of self-immolations within the US.⁹¹ Again, this was carried out in a busy area, a street corner in Detroit, in order to attract attention and publicity. The *Washington Post* commented that shoppers 'looked on in horror'.⁹² Although her act was not an official WILPF or WSP initiative, the carbon copy of a letter addressed to U Thant, secretary general of the United Nations, indicated that her motivations to protest were in keeping with WILPF's aims.⁹³ Furthermore, many people were able to vouch for her character to pre-empt claims that this was an act of insanity: for instance,

⁸⁶ Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?*, p. 370.

⁸⁷ Dorothy Marder, 'Women Strike for Peace Die-In Outside of ITT Building', 12 April 1972, in Photographs of Dorothy Marder, accessed via http://www.swarthmore.edu/Library/peace/Exhibits/Dorothy%20Marder/MarderExhibit1A_files/MarderExhibit1A.html [last accessed 23 April 2015].

⁸⁸ Jeffreys-Jones, *Peace Now!*, p. 143.

⁸⁹ Anonymous, 'Women of Peace: WILPF Honors Members Who've Passed', *Peace and Freedom*, vol. 70, no. 2 (2010), p. 16; Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?*, p. 206.

⁹⁰ Malcolm Browne, 'Burning Monk', 11 June 1963, in Pete Hamill, *Vietnam: The Real War* (New York: Abrams, 2013), p. 64; John Prados, *Vietnam: The History of an Unwinnable War, 1945-1975* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), p. 66.

⁹¹ 'Self-Burned U.N. Pacifist Dies', *The Boston Globe*, 11 Nov 1965.

⁹² 'Detroit Widow Sets Self Afire In Viet Protest', *The Washington Post*, 18 Mar 1965.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

her pastor told the *New York Times* that she was 'an intellectual in the best sense of the word'.⁹⁴ Evidently, she had thoroughly, yet secretly, planned this act of protest, which guaranteed her own death in order to shock the nation. Although extreme, this is an example of the tactics that campaigners could embrace. Indeed, Herz's action attracted global attention. A minute of silence was held in Hanoi after her death, which would inevitably aggravate the US administration.⁹⁵ Overall, creative campaigning methods undoubtedly succeeded in gaining attention and raising awareness of the reality of the country's involvement in South East Asia.

Furthermore, militancy was a vital feature of WSP's tactics. Amy Swerdlow remembers WSP as the most militant group since the suffragettes.⁹⁶ Indeed, Swerdlow's own involvement may have led her to glorify their impact. However, there is vast evidence to support her assertion. Aileen Hutchinson and Beverley Farquaharson became known as 'Napalm ladies' and 'housewife terrorists' after blocking napalm trucks in California.⁹⁷ In a 1966 issue of *MEMO*, WSP's monthly newsletter, they stated 'We did stop murder for up to 63 minutes before our arrests'.⁹⁸ This demonstrates not only their active militancy, but the playful tone in which they remember the incident suggests that they were eager to repeat similar acts of protest. The 1967 Jeannette Rankin Brigade was the pinnacle of the collective use of creativity and militancy. Amy Swerdlow remembers five thousand women 'most clad in black' following the 'spry and sassy former congresswoman' in protest against the war in Vietnam.⁹⁹ When nearly two hundred women marched on the Capitol grounds, an act which was forbidden in US law, the guard ordered the doors to be locked in the fear that his task of thirty men would be too overwhelmed.¹⁰⁰ This demonstrates the physical impact such a large procession of

⁹⁴ David Jones, 'Woman, 82, Sets Herself Afire in Street as Protest on Vietnam', *The New York Times*, 18 Mar 1965.

⁹⁵ 'People of Hanoi Salute Mrs. Herz', *The Washington Post*, 29 March 1965.

⁹⁶ Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 170.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 134. See also Amy Scott, 'Patriots for Peace: People to People Democracy and the Anti-War Movement' in Andrew Weist, *New Perspectives on the Vietnam War: Re-examining the Culture and History of a Generation* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2010), p. 129.

⁹⁸ Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 134.

⁹⁹ Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 138.

¹⁰⁰ Jean M White, '2,500 Women Storm Pentagon Over War', *The Washington Post*, 16 Feb 1967.

women had. Ultimately, these women used militancy as a means of forcing the administration to recognise their presence.

Militant Motherhood and the Draft

Female activists adopted a maternal stance alongside this militancy and often tried to evoke national sympathy through this image of women as mothers. For instance, when they demonstrated against the use of napalm on children in Vietnam, they wheeled their own children in prams.¹⁰¹ This proved most effective as they were able to highlight a link between mothers in the US and mothers in Vietnam, which undoubtedly generated sympathy among mothers. WSP also used this maternal stance in advertisements. For instance, an advert in the *New York Times*, captioned a picture of a man in a cap and gown: 'He graduates in June of 1965, will he die in Vietnam in June of 1965?'¹⁰² In both instances, they targeted mothers by demonstrating how foreign policy affected them. Carol Cohn applauds women's employment of the motherly role and highlights how it was reused in the eighties 'at the height of cold war rhetoric in peace camps'.¹⁰³ Maternity, however, was often mixed with militancy. The anti-draft movement demonstrates this. Women delivered a coffin to General Hershey that stated 'not my son, not your son, not their sons', before tearing down fences and crawling under police lines whilst withstanding clubs.¹⁰⁴ Ultimately, the juxtaposing of women's maternal roles and their militancy created intrigue and fascination, which gained them the media attention they needed to generate support.

However, the marginalisation of females in the draft movement encouraged women to question the patriarchy of war, forcing them to take their own unique place in the movement. Women exploited their role as mothers in order to gain legitimacy within the movement, allowing the draft to become a fundamental target of their campaign. Historians, however, have often overlooked women's

¹⁰¹ 'Women Picket UN in Vietnam Appeal', *New York Times*, 7 Jul 1966.

¹⁰² 'Display Ad 15-No Title', *New York Times*, 26 June 1965.

¹⁰³ Cohn and Jacobson, 'Women and Political Activism in the Face of War and Militarization' in Cohn (eds.), *Women and Wars*, p. 119.

¹⁰⁴ Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 178.

involvement in the draft resistance movement for the simple reason that women were not drafted. David Cortright, for instance, states that draft resistance was the 'cutting edge' of the anti-war movement in 1967 and 1968, yet he fails to recognise women's participation by focusing mainly on the twenty-seven million men who were deferred.¹⁰⁵ The anti-draft programme adopted in December 1967 restricted women to a supportive role through the slogan 'Gals say yes to boys who say no'.¹⁰⁶ However, WSP combatted this marginalisation by setting up draft counselling for draft resisters across the nation. By the end of the war, the Long Island service alone had counselled 100,000 men.¹⁰⁷ This was a uniquely feminine and maternal way of helping the anti-draft movement and, at the same time, highlights the success of WSP's strategy: by presenting themselves in a role that society knew and trusted, they managed to help thousands of young men avoid going to Vietnam. Meanwhile, they demonstrated to the administration the lengths they were prepared to go. WSP's commitment was solidified and justified in their 1967 statement of complicity, which asserted that 'as mothers, sisters, sweethearts, wives', they had a 'moral responsibility' to prevent men from being drafted.¹⁰⁸ Thus, although they were not able to burn their own draft cards, women put their all into draft resistance; men were going to prison for resisting the draft and here women demonstrated their willingness to do the same. Similarly, in 1971 the Los Angeles branch of WSP supported the imprisoned draft resisters Dan and Phil Herrigan by publishing statements in their monthly newsletter *L.A. Wisp*, which incorporated the bold accusation that there was a governmental conspiracy to silence the anti-war movement.¹⁰⁹ Women's risk-taking not only shows their relentless determination, but also suggests that the women's movement was taking shape through finding ways to combat the patriarchy of war and recognising their political strengths.

¹⁰⁵ Cortright, *Peace*, p. 164.

¹⁰⁶ Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Knopf, 1979), p. 179.

¹⁰⁷ Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 165.

¹⁰⁸ Women Strike for Peace, 'Women's Statement of Conscience', 20 September, 1967 in Robert McMahon, *Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War: Documents and Essays* (Fourth Edition, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), p. 406.

¹⁰⁹ Mary Clarke and Varda Ullman, 'Escalation', *L.A. Wisp*, Feb 1971.

International Sisterhood and Political Consciousness

In no campaign were maternity and the need to empathise with the Vietnamese more utilised than in the meetings between American and Vietnamese women. Lorraine Gordon and Mary Clarke were the first women to make the trip to Hanoi in 1965 to meet with members of the Vietnamese Women's Union of North Vietnam and the Women's Union of Liberation of South Vietnam.¹¹⁰ This led to a subsequent meeting between ten American women and nine Vietnamese in Djakarta later that year; Swerdlow recalls this as both 'remarkable' and 'daring'.¹¹¹ Indeed, this encounter was daring as it was the first formal meeting between an American peace group and people from Vietnam.¹¹² What was remarkable about it was the nature of these encounters and how the women interacted with the supposed enemy. Meetings were informal and encouraged strong bonds and friendships, as is demonstrated in a photograph of Mary Clarke and Lorraine Gordon at their first meeting, sitting comfortably with Vietnamese women drinking tea.¹¹³ Moreover, WSP often referred to them as 'our Vietnamese sisters'.¹¹⁴ The women shared stories which were recounted in the US in order to gain support. They portrayed their Vietnamese sisters as relatable victims and mothers in order to appeal to women across the US.¹¹⁵ However, this perception, which served campaigning purposes, is flawed, due to the inaccuracy of this representation of the Vietnamese women. As Jessica Frazier argues, the Vietnamese mothers did not define themselves as victims, and many played a militant role in what they viewed as their revolutionary war against the Americans.¹¹⁶ This suggests that the personal testimonies used in the US acted chiefly as peace propaganda, and do not necessarily demonstrate an accurate or genuine desire to provide these women with a voice

¹¹⁰ Jessica Frazier, 'Collaborative Efforts to End the War in Viet Nam: The Interactions of Women Strike for Peace, the Vietnamese Women's Union, and the Women's Union of Liberation, 1965–1968', *Peace & Change*, vol. 37, no. 3 (2012), p. 339.

¹¹¹ Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 214.

¹¹² Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?*, p. 57.

¹¹³ 'Hanoi, Pham Van Dong, Lorraine Gordon, and Mary Clarke photograph', May 1965, in Dated Images/Billboards, etc., in *WSPR*.

¹¹⁴ United Women's Contingent, 'March on Washington Against the War', 24 April 1971, in Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance Archives, accessed via http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01001/ [last accessed 23 April 2015].

¹¹⁵ Frazier, 'Collaborative Efforts to End the War in Viet Nam', p. 342.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

overseas. Nevertheless, a demonstration to deliver a letter to the Vice President on behalf of Vietnamese mothers, pleading to release their sons from Con Son Prison, suggests otherwise.¹¹⁷ This act demonstrates that WSP were able to conveniently combine tactics and genuine compassion to help the Vietnamese, even if they did exploit the truth slightly.

These acquaintances proved beneficial in more ways than one as they contributed to a feminist sentiment among women from the US. Not only did the meetings demonstrate the strength of female diplomacy compared to the men who were waging war, these meetings also seemed to highlight the patriarchy experienced by American women in US society. Vietnamese women, they discovered, were encouraged to get involved in politics, rather than made to assume subservience.¹¹⁸ Therefore in meetings, American women were encouraged to speak first in order to overcome their socially conditioned reluctance.¹¹⁹ As historian Mary Hershberger suggests, this filled WSP with 'self-confidence and a sense of legitimacy'.¹²⁰ Although this international alliance aided activism in America, what was most remarkable about these meetings was the way in which these interactions raised the political consciousness of American women.

Active campaigning against foreign policy had a similar impact. As mentioned in Chapter One, WSP gradually became more aware of political processes, and this was reflected in their campaigning methods. They sought to empower women in higher leadership roles by writing to female legislators and in particular targeting First Ladies for help. In 1961, WSP appealed to Jackie Kennedy to join their struggle.¹²¹ They similarly saw it as a victory when Bella Abzug became a congresswoman in 1962, viewing this as a gateway into the legislative process. Furthermore, from 1965 to 1970, thousands of WSP members worked actively in the Democratic Party, supporting peace candidates

¹¹⁷ Cynthia Fredrick, 'Women Play Key Role in Growing Saigon Peace Movement', in Bella Abzug Material, in *WSPR*.

¹¹⁸ Adams, 'The Women Who Left Them Behind', p. 187.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Mary Hershberger, *Travelling to Vietnam: American Peace Activists and the War* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1998), p. 13.

¹²¹ Mary Smith, 'For and About Women, 500 Women Picket for Peace', *Washington Post*, 2 Nov 1961.

and becoming active as leaders in the 'Dump Johnson' movement.¹²² The growing anti-war movement in particular proved the ideal climate to nurture feminist sentiment. Women were evidently beginning to embrace the gender divide in politics and articulating feminist ideologies. Amy Swerdlow admits to being one of the many women that were eventually beginning to 'make a connection between war and male violence towards women'.¹²³ Thus, peace activism was nurturing feminism among different kinds of women. Female peace activists' first formal encounter with second-wave feminism was after the Jeannette Rankin Brigade in 1967, when some women split off to bury traditional motherhood. The most radical of the women carried a dummy to Arlington cemetery and staged a mock funeral, whilst various women gave speeches on the patriarchy of war and female empowerment, one stating that 'we cannot hope to move towards a better world... before we begin to solve our own problems'.¹²⁴ Despite the fact that some fifty women broke off in disgust, Amy Swerdlow reflects that it gave all women involved a great deal to think about.¹²⁵ Furthermore, Sara Evans acknowledges that a number of women's liberation groups formed following the Jeannette Rankin Brigade.¹²⁶ Women's peace activism had exposed WSP to new concepts of an empowered female identity. This proved a potential distraction, encouraging a change of direction towards second-wave feminism.

Conclusion

Although coalition building helped gain attention due to increased participation, the women proved just as effective campaigning as an all-women organisation. These individual campaigns among

¹²² Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 146. See also Dorothy Marder, 'Anti-Thieu Demonstration', 1 Nov 1962, in Photographs of Dorothy Marder, accessed via http://www.swarthmore.edu/Library/peace/Exhibits/Dorothy%20Marder/MarderExhibit1A_files/MarderExhibit1A.html [last accessed 23 April, 2015].

¹²³ Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 230.

¹²⁴ Kathie Ametniek, 'Funeral Oration for The Burial of Traditional Womanhood', Jan 1968, in Classic Feminist Writings, accessed via <http://www.uic.edu/orgs/cwluherstory/CWLUArchive/rankin2.html> [last accessed 23 April 2015].

¹²⁵ Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 140. See also Shulamith Firestone, 'The Jeannette Rankin Brigade: Woman Power?', Jan 1968, in Classic Feminist Writings, accessed via <http://www.uic.edu/orgs/cwluherstory/CWLUArchive/rankin1.html> [last accessed 23 April 2015].

¹²⁶ Evans, *Personal Politics*, p. 208.

WILPF and WSP women gained them their status as two of the leading organisations in the peace movement during the Sixties. Women defined their position in this movement through a number of qualities. Their sharp ideas and bold actions demonstrated their determination, whilst their creative use of resources, such as costumes attracted attention. Although they often took their inspiration for creative campaigns from other activists, they were always eager to shock the nation. Meanwhile, their selectivity in when and where they staged their campaigns in order to attract optimum publicity also played a part. Women managed to succeed through militant tactics due to the fact that their campaigns were double- edged, as they also focussed on realistic ways of achieving their goals, namely through support for peace candidates and by adopting distinctly feminine stances where necessary. As a consequence, women generated more effective change alone than they would have as part of the wider movement, as they were able to participate in large demonstrations, whilst also actively helping individuals, as they did for instance with draft counselling. Motherhood was a tactical façade which all women of WSP and WILPF, whether mothers or not, took up in order to establish their legitimacy in a movement dominated by men. This gender separation within both the movement and in society became even clearer as women's groups became exposed to politics and the world. Thus, the irony is that women who campaigned under the heading of mothers actually sought to eradicate this singular image of women. WSP's exposure to politics and other activist organisations undoubtedly encouraged them to reconsider their own status within US society.

III

'Action – Not Talk': Bella Abzug's Commitment to Peace and Feminism

In order to fully understand the nature and impact of peace activism upon the women involved, it is vital to look at politics more closely and, in particular, at female political leaders. No woman is a more appropriate figure in this sense than WSP legislative chairwoman, turned congresswoman, Bella Abzug. Named Woman of the Year by WSP in 1970 and listed in the twenty most influential women in the world in a 1977 Gallup poll, she clearly made an impression upon many people, not only activists.¹²⁷ Abzug was not the average WSP activist. It is therefore important to firstly assess how her character and occupation as a Civil Rights lawyer influenced WSP women, mobilising them politically and encouraging them to acknowledge their own potential. WSP's valuable support for her political campaign ten years later was a reflection of Abzug's importance for this group, although WSP was just one of several factors that aided her election to the House of Representatives in 1971. The demanding role as a congresswoman meant tackling a wider array of issues than just the grievances of WSP, including women's rights. This raises the question of how she divided her time between different causes. An exploration of her time in Congress shall allow for an evaluation of her commitment to WSP. As Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones argues, women recognised the way war was largely a product of America's patriarchal society, and trusted their own gender to get them out of Vietnam; many did indeed express hopes about Abzug's ability to make a difference.¹²⁸ Historians such as Jeffrey Bloodworth have therefore seen Abzug as 'the link between the women's movement and the peace movement'.¹²⁹ She was a galvanising force whose importance for the anti-war movement must not be underestimated.

¹²⁷ 'Bella: Our Woman of the Year' in Bella Abzug Material, in *WSPR*; Anonymous, 'Bella Abzug Dies', *Off our Backs*, vol. 28, no. 05 (1998) p. 4.

¹²⁸ Jeffreys-Jones, *Peace Now!*, pp. 143-145.

¹²⁹ Bloodworth, *Losing the Center*, p. 12.

Born in the Bronx in 1920, Abzug accredits much of her success to her Jewish mother and father 'encouraging her to be forceful'.¹³⁰ She demonstrated a feminist spirit at an early age, when upon her father's death she contradicted Jewish law by saying mourners Kaddish at a synagogue – this was strictly the privilege of a son of the deceased.¹³¹ After graduating from Columbia University's Law School, Abzug went on to become a civil rights lawyer and gained status during the Willie McGee rape case, who she was convinced had been framed.¹³² In this male-dominated field, she took to wearing hats to distinguish herself from other lawyers' assistants, which later became her trade mark accessory, recognised both among the law profession and later in the media.¹³³ Abzug devoted much of her time to WSP whilst still working and remained a dominant figure throughout the Sixties until her election to the House of Representatives in January 1971. Her achievements over the next seven years expand much beyond the pressure exerted to withdraw military troops from Vietnam. She was also the first to call for a resolution to impeach Nixon and she called for both the first federal Gay Rights Bill and the first Bill to decriminalise marijuana.¹³⁴ Upon Abzug's death in 1998, Gloria Steinem wrote 'she became a woman who spans it [the world] by her sheer courage'.¹³⁵

Abzug and WSP

Abzug's manner and political agenda was not initially embraced by WSP in 1961, yet her presence eventually succeeded in transforming the organisation into a forward-thinking political entity. Indeed, Abzug's pre-WSP life was the paradox of many other WSP women's lives, and her image contradicted the one which they sought to adopt. Moreover, historian Alan Levy has placed emphasis upon the fact that her persona, as Gloria Steinem quoted, "scared the s- out" of the

¹³⁰ Patricia Bosworth, 'Bella Abzug', *The Nation*, vol. 277, no. 3 (2003). See also Mary E. Fredrickson, review of Alan Levy, *The Political Life of Bella Abzug, 1920-1976: Political Passions, Women's Rights, and Congressional Battles*, in *The Journal of American History*, vol. 101, no. 3 (2014), pp. 1002-1003.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 145.

¹³³ Gertzog, *Congressional Women*, p. 178; Sara Sikki Otey, 'Sikki Otey Backs Bella', 16 Oct 1970' in Lunch-in for Bella, in *WSPR*..

¹³⁴ Anonymous, 'Bella Abzug Dies', *Off our Backs*, vol. 28, no. 05 (1998), p. 4.

¹³⁵ Gloria Steinem, 'Bella Abzug', *Ms*, vol. 01, no. 62 (1998), p. 62.

women she worked with'.¹³⁶ On the whole, one is able to see with ease the dichotomy that existed between the two leaders, Dagmar Wilson and Abzug. Swerdlow alludes to the fact that the latter was never a WSP spokeswoman because she did not fit into the 'mother and housewife' image, unlike Wilson.¹³⁷ This supports the idea that there was initial hostility or scepticism surrounding Abzug and her values within the organisation.

However, her political agenda appears to have been more daunting for WSP women than her persona. Her occupation in a male-dominated field undoubtedly influenced her feminist agenda, and her legal training and career made her extremely knowledgeable about legislation. On paper, she was an ideal leader for a female activist group, yet talk of politics in 1961 alienated many WSP housewives. Abzug tried to get WSP to support peace candidates and to, as she put it, get women to realise they had a right to peace 'not only for the sake of their children'.¹³⁸ However, this contradicted WSP's initial philosophy surrounding the dangers of nuclear testing, as their stance relied on the 'concerned mother' image. Abzug recognised that Wilson herself 'was always a little leery about trying to make WSP more political'.¹³⁹ As previously discussed, Wilson was the recognised leader, both in the media and among the women, thus in order to politicise WSP women Abzug had to convince the toughest component of the organisation, the figurehead. Jeffrey Bloodworth supports the assertion that initially WSP women did not fully respect her 'political instincts and agenda'.¹⁴⁰ Nonetheless, as has been discussed in Chapter One, WSP slowly became more involved with politics in the latter half of the decade, and by 1968, under the direction of Abzug, they had formed several peace action committees in New York to focus on the military costs of the war.¹⁴¹ She furthermore developed strategies to link a woman's right to have a say in the political process to motherhood. This can be demonstrated through the WSP slogan during their

¹³⁶ Alan Levy, *The Political Life of Bella Abzug, 1920-1976: Political Passions, Women's Rights, and Congressional Battles* (Lanham: Lexington, 2013), p. 1.

¹³⁷ Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 53.

¹³⁸ Levine and Thom, *Bella Abzug*, p. 61.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 85.

¹⁴⁰ Bloodworth, *Losing the Center*, p. 158.

¹⁴¹ Abzug, *Bella!*, p. 87.

1968 electoral campaign 'Doves in Washington, Sons at Home'.¹⁴² This slogan affirmed female authority, whilst also legitimising their right, as mothers, to be assertive. Abzug caused an initial uproar in WSP with her outspoken persona and political ideals, but she ultimately broadened the perspectives of many women, thus helping WSP to legitimise itself.

Abzug's campaign in 1970 provides a greater insight into how WSP's perception of her changed throughout the Sixties, as they began to rely on her as a major campaigning force in the fight against the Vietnam War. Running for Manhattan's West Side, Abzug's defeat of the longstanding politician Leonard Farbstein, at a time when only nine women were serving in the House, came as a shock to many.¹⁴³ WSP women accredited her success to their efforts, and thus labelled this moment as a WSP victory. Swerdlow in particular has emphasised the role that the 255 WSP members working in her campaign headquarters played during her campaign.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, WSP material often referred to her as 'our' peace candidate.¹⁴⁵ Undoubtedly, their extensive support and fundraising contributed to her success. For instance, one of a number of WSP luncheons for Abzug in October 1970 raised \$5,000 towards her campaign.¹⁴⁶ Abzug herself also credited her success to 'the fact that I am legislative chairwoman of WSP'.¹⁴⁷ This, however, demonstrates less a recognition of WSP's efforts, but rather highlights the individual work she had done to legitimise her position in the peace movement. Undoubtedly, Abzug's success had much to do with her ability as an orator. She was a great communicator and excelled at giving speeches, as Lesley Gore applauds: 'It was almost as if a switch went on... the speech came alive as if she was singing a song that everyone knew and loved.'¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, she was not only the peace candidate, but the women's candidate too. She played on the traditional subservience of women with the slogan 'This woman's place is in the

¹⁴² Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 145.

¹⁴³ Levine and Thom, *Bella Abzug*, p. 85.

¹⁴⁴ Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 153.

¹⁴⁵ 'Lunch in for Bella', in Lunch-in for Bella, in *WSPR*.

¹⁴⁶ Muriel Newberger, Letter to WSP Members, 13 October 1970, in Lunch-in for Bella, in *WSPR*.

¹⁴⁷ 'Hurricane Bella Heads for Washington', in Bella Abzug Material, in *WSPR*.

¹⁴⁸ Levine and Thom, *Bella Abzug*, p. 95.

House', which, as Bloodworth notes 'struck a feminist note'.¹⁴⁹ Doug Ireland, Abzug's campaign organiser, also recalls how she was the first electoral candidate to actively go to the gay community to seek votes.¹⁵⁰ Thus it appears that she was able to identify and engage the gap in the electorate and this, alongside her talent as an influential communicator, was largely responsible for her success. Abzug herself acknowledges her own efforts, as she says with regards to her standing in the streets talking to people with a megaphone all day and night: 'that's what won it for me'.¹⁵¹ This ultimately demonstrates how Abzug utilised her philosophy of grassroots activism and her sheer determination to make her presence known. Moreover, Shirley Margolin, a fellow WSP activist, recalled how she 'worked all day and all night'; therefore the long hours campaigning were nothing new to her.¹⁵² Although WSP's role was highly significant in the campaign, it appears that they relied more on Abzug's campaign to gain publicity than she did on them to gain votes.

An Activist in the House

The relationship between Abzug and WSP flourished once she was elected. Instead of allowing herself to become detached from the organisation, she took on the dual role of congresswoman and activist. The most common comment from the women of the organisation after the inauguration was of pride, that: 'I almost feel as though we had elected our first woman President.'¹⁵³ This highlights the significance of this event for WSP as almost revolutionary. It also indicates a shift in attitudes; WSP had recognised that the political empowerment of women was crucial to defeating the Congressional emphasis on war. Abzug also acknowledged that her success 'augmented WSP's public voice'.¹⁵⁴ This sentiment of WSP success was brought alive at Abzug's inauguration; thousands of WSP women attended her swearing-in by fellow female politician Shirley Christolme. This

¹⁴⁹ Bloodworth, *Losing the Center*, p. 162.

¹⁵⁰ Levine and Thom, *Bella Abzug*, p. 100.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 87.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, p. 65.

¹⁵³ 'Press Release', in Bella Abzug Material, in *WSPR*.

¹⁵⁴ 'Women in Washington State of Congress Message: Bella Gives 'Em Hell', in Bella Abzug Material, in *WSPR*.

overwhelming female presence in Washington appears symbolic, not only of WSP's success, but of women's increasing political power. Abzug's success was indeed a triumph for WSP.

Unfortunately, however, WSP struggled to come to terms with this transition. Although Abzug expressed the need for WSP to work for her whilst she was in Congress, by encouraging their own legislators to listen to her speeches and support her demands, she was now a woman with a lot less time for activism and a much wider range of issues to address.¹⁵⁵ In her diary, Abzug regretted that the organisation demanded so much of her, yet she admitted that she was unable to say no to them: 'After all I'm one of them.'¹⁵⁶ It appears that Abzug worked relentlessly to make time for WSP meetings and to maintain her position in the organisation; her activism outside the House did not stop when she entered it.¹⁵⁷ She was constantly outspoken about the fact that she was an activist and she wanted 'action – not talk.'¹⁵⁸ Swerdlow notes that Abzug's work within Congress expanded well beyond the issue of peace, yet she still reserved time for WSP.¹⁵⁹ She relied on WSP support and evidently still considered herself an active member, who admired how they had grown with her. Ultimately, little changed as far as Abzug was concerned when she entered the House of Representatives; she saw it simply as another tactic to end the war, and if she failed in this mission she was prepared to 'go back outside again'.¹⁶⁰ Despite the fact that she expanded her aspirations, Abzug clearly identified primarily as a WSP woman and fundamentally as an activist.

Battling the System

Abzug was a controversial character within the House. One reason for this was that she did not only intend to change Congress's stance on war, but sought to transform the whole political system. She spent much of her time 'trying to figure out how to beat the machine and knock the crap out of the

¹⁵⁵ Amy Swerdlow, 'We Will Be Called on to Pressure Our Own Congressmen...' in Bella Abzug Material, in *WSPR*. See also 'Women in Washington State of Congress Message: Bella Gives 'Em Hell, in Bella Abzug Material, in *WSPR*.

¹⁵⁶ Abzug, *Bella!*, p. 178.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 177-178.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, *Bella!*, p. 166.

¹⁵⁹ Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 157.

¹⁶⁰ Abzug, *Bella!*, p. 6.

political power system'.¹⁶¹ This quotation demonstrates her frustration at a political structure which was not allowing her to put troop withdrawal onto its agenda. It further implies that she believed herself and her ideas quite revolutionary, given her refusal to abide by the existing system. Gertzog criticises this attitude and how she began to direct her frustration at her colleagues and the system, when she was failing to progress on the war issue.¹⁶² Indeed in many instances Abzug's criticism and frustration was a result of rejection, as she demonstrated when the Democrats failed to put the Vietnam Disengagement Act (to withdraw troops by the end of the year) on the agenda, she barked: 'all they do is discuss and discuss until it comes out of their ears.'¹⁶³ However, Gertzog's assertion fails to take into account that her time as a WSP leader contributed to much of her resentment for the political structure. This discontent therefore may more accurately be explained by her preconceived hostilities to politicians, whose conduct was seen as fundamentally paradoxical to that of a political activist of the time. Underlying hostilities can be seen when Secretary of Defence, Melvin Laird invited her to visit him at the Pentagon and she replied 'I was already there... but they wouldn't let me in' – in reference to the WSP march on the Pentagon, 1967.¹⁶⁴ This demonstrates the hard feelings Abzug still felt from her time as an activist, and her admittance onto the inside had not changed her activist mindset. Thus, Abzug's time in the House appears merely an extension of her activism, rather than a new beginning. Being a woman in a male-dominated House of Representatives in the 1970s was bound to create barriers to success. Therefore, Abzug took on the political system and anyone who got in her way with wholehearted force, overcoming ample barriers through research, persistence and with a fighting spirit.

On her very first day in the House, she introduced a bill which called for the withdrawal of troops from Vietnam by the Fourth of July 1971, demonstrating immediately to the public and other House

¹⁶¹ Ibid, p. 209.

¹⁶² Gertzog, *Congressional Women*, p. 171.

¹⁶³ Abzug, *Bella!*, p. 51.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 82.

members her passion for the cause.¹⁶⁵ Her mission was to attain a place on the Armed Services Committee, in order to ‘bust up this war from the inside’.¹⁶⁶ She noticed that those sitting on the committee were men, already involved in the military; thus they were unlikely to challenge it.¹⁶⁷ She skilfully took the opportunity to introduce a feminist argument by alluding to the fact that the committee was not representative of the 42,000 women in the armed forces.¹⁶⁸ Although Abzug was not successful, she demonstrated her understanding and ambition, heading straight to the root of the Vietnam issue. Upon later discovering the rarely used ‘resolution of inquiry’ method, which could make the President answer directly to the House, she ordered two in one week.¹⁶⁹ Her persistence complemented her research skills. The many hawks in the House even found ways to combat this resolution by bringing it to the floor on the one and only occasion that Abzug was slightly late.¹⁷⁰ This was just one of the many elements of ‘rigidity and trickery’ in the House which upset Abzug.¹⁷¹ Nonetheless, her resolution meant she was able to get her grievances heard by President Nixon, and the issue was acknowledged once again by her colleagues.

Feminism

One of Abzug’s main strengths was her ability to appeal to a number of different groups of people, by highlighting how their concerns were interconnected; in particular she appealed to feminists by merging relatable issues. Bloodworth contends that she forged a ‘political alliance’ between the two.¹⁷² Indeed she was not simply a peace candidate but, as a woman entering into yet another male-dominated profession, she became a woman’s candidate too. Furthermore, Jeffreys-Jones has highlighted how women preferred to write to female legislators, so now women had more choice in

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 128; Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 154.

¹⁶⁶ Abzug, *Bella!*, p. 14.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, pp. 16-17.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, pp. 187-194.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 244.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, p. 249.

¹⁷² Bloodworth, *Losing the Center*, p. 12.

the political arena.¹⁷³ Abzug believed in empowering women politically and emphasised the need to reach out to young women to take part in the political system because 'it reeks of sameness'.¹⁷⁴ This encouragement for politicising women leaders reflects another element of her ambitions; to change the American political system. Nonetheless, she constantly intertwined her feminist grievances with war; in one speech Abzug suggested that a Congress made up of large numbers of women may not have let the war go on for so long.¹⁷⁵ This statement is one example of how she cleverly gave feminists a reason to oppose the war, and how she herself increasingly acknowledged peace to be a feminist issue. Indeed, Abzug decided to formally add feminism to her agenda with the founding of the National Women's political caucus in 1971, which saw the union of women from twenty-six states in Washington with an ultimate goal to attract more women to politics.¹⁷⁶ Nonetheless peace remained the main issue for Abzug peace, as is demonstrated in her criticism of Betty Friedan's focus on channelling large quantities of women into Congress. She questions Friedan's disregard of the political stance of these women: 'do we want the kind of women who are going to vote for missiles and Vietnam wars?'¹⁷⁷ This demonstrates that Abzug did not convert from peace activism to feminism, but that feminism became an addition to her political agenda, and WSP's ambition for world peace remained close to her heart.

Conclusion

Ultimately, Abzug's impact upon WSP and the feminist cause deserves much more credit than it has previously received. Despite the reservations women of WSP had about Abzug, she caught their attention by first conditioning herself to appeal to their maternal image, before eventually transforming WSP into a more political and forward-thinking organisation. She gradually became a more respected leader among the women, to the point where they viewed her success collectively

¹⁷³ Jeffreys-Jones, *Peace Now!*, p. 66.

¹⁷⁴ Abzug, *Bella!*, p. 6. See also Amy Swerdlow, 'Bella's Report on the State of Congress Was Brief...' in Bella Abzug Material, in *WSPR*.

¹⁷⁵ Abzug, *Bella!*, p. 31.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 198.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 164.

as the organisation's platform to the House of Representatives. These women were a vital element of Abzug's campaigning success, yet equally were her own efforts and techniques, which appealed to an assortment of constituents. Despite the fact that Abzug's political agenda was much broader than WSP's, troop withdrawal from Vietnam remained her chief aim. Thus, her commitment to them continued throughout her first years in office. Abzug as an individual however, faced many barriers whilst in Congress which she put down to the rigidity of the political system. Yet, despite the occasional upset, crumbling under the pressure, or blending into the background, was not her style; transforming the whole system was. In spite of the rejection and barriers which she faced, it is likely that the reason for her endeavour to transform Congress stemmed largely from her experiences in WSP. She was an activist at heart and far from a traditional politician. Thus Abzug's work in Congress was, most importantly, an extension of her peace activism in WSP, and she was always willing, if not eager, to get back out and help her sisters. Abzug also fundamentally helped set the ground work for the introduction of more women in politics. Abzug's innovation and hard-work enabled her to effectively combine the peace issue and the women's issue. In doing so, she successfully increased support for, and awareness of both.

Conclusion

Increased female participation in peace activism played a major part in the politicisation of American women in the Sixties. There were, of course, several other factors which aided this development, such as women's participation in Civil Rights protests and the influence of an influx of feminist literature and legislation, such as the Equal Pay Act in 1963.¹⁷⁸ However, women's peace organisations such as WSP were particularly effective as they physically united many women in a common cause: the struggle against a war that affected them as wives and mothers. The progress made by WSP, as illustrated in this dissertation, is important as it marks a transitional period in the state of women's political consciousness. Meanwhile, Bella Abzug's election campaign represents the pivotal point of this journey and is epitomised by the slogan 'This woman's place is in the House', which solidified the two causes.¹⁷⁹

It is evident that women, particularly WILPF and WSP members, represented a very distinct section of the peace movement. Many historians recognise that WSP mainly consisted of white middle-class women.¹⁸⁰ However, they fail to emphasise how the movement heavily benefitted from the resources and time given by these women. Meanwhile, having a distinct identity allowed these two organisations to distinguish themselves within the wider movement. Thus under-representation, although a recognised issue, was not a disadvantage. Furthermore, as many historians have argued, WSP grew out of a rejection for the structure and principles of other groups, including WILPF. However, this dissertation has demonstrated how their efforts to form an original structure were unsuccessful, due to the existence of an unintended. Nonetheless, the rejection of WILPF's structure and the urgency of the Vietnam issue gave them the determination to develop at a rapid pace. A comparison of the two organisations has demonstrated this development. The WILPF microfilms have demonstrated the political and overseas connections WILPF had. By contrast, Swerdlow's

¹⁷⁸ See, for instance the different contributions in Stephanie Gilmore (eds.), *Feminist coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008)

¹⁷⁹ Levine and Thom, *Bella Abzug*, p. 83.

¹⁸⁰ Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?*, p. 103; Estepa, 'Taking the White Gloves off', p. 93.

personal memories of WSP's encounters with WILPF have only highlighted WSP's initial lack of experience. It is therefore fair to say that WSP performed exceptionally well to become by 1967, one of the leading, recognisable groups in the peace movement.

Historiography on peace activism rarely captures the full extent of women's participation and effect.¹⁸¹ WILPF and WSP gave women a unique place in the peace movement via their creative campaigning methods. Admittedly, some of their most publicity-capturing acts were inspired by, or took place in collaboration with, other peace activists – so their activism was not completely separate from the wider movement. Nonetheless, WSP activists demonstrated their willingness and determination to participate in radical forms of protest. A consideration of the range of techniques women employed, and their ability to tailor them to any situation, allows us to qualify women's tactics as innovative. The juxtaposition between their presentation of themselves as mothers in the draft movement, and their frequent militancy, created an intriguing image. WSP success can be measured in the amount of media attention it received and the amount of people they attracted to the peace cause, but also by its long-term effect upon women. The former has largely been regarded in historiography as WSP's main talent. Yet, this dissertation has demonstrated how towards the end of the Sixties, WSP also had a certain degree of influence over various politicians, despite their limited success in redirecting foreign policy. Their support of peace candidates, most importantly of Bella Abzug, was central to their long-term success. This, alongside education and chiefly exposure to the world through meetings with Vietnamese women, they gradually increased women's political consciousness and stimulated the expansion of feminist thought. Developing their separate movement and identity as women facilitated this move towards the second-wave.

Bella Abzug was the catalyst for this process of politicisation. As a recognised leader of WSP, she encouraged WSP women to utilise the US political system, by targeting peace candidates in elections. Indeed, as is noted already by historians, she was not appreciated quite as much when she began as

¹⁸¹ Jeffreys-Jones, *Peace Now!*, p. 60.

a leader of WSP, than as a congresswoman.¹⁸² She was the woman behind the scenes of the organisation in the Sixties. Yet, the involvement of WSP women in her political campaign shows that WSP must have gained respect for her values long before her role in the House. The politicisation of women and the influence of Bella Abzug correlate. Her influence on WSP was a slow burn affair but with education came the organisation's respect for Abzug. Her campaign allowed them to solidify their commitment, both to Abzug and to politics. The vital significance of Abzug was her ability to influence WSP whilst gaining support of feminists. This was fundamentally achieved by her ability to link the key issues surrounding feminism and peace. Her renewed sense of fighting for the women's cause did not distract her; it aided her. Historians analysing Abzug as a congresswoman, rather than an activist, have criticised her conduct in the House.¹⁸³ However this dissertation has shed light on various justifications for her reservations and attitude, chiefly the uncooperative reception WSP often experienced from the administration. Abzug remained an activist after 1970, and the political system remained her foremost enemy.

Female activist organisations like WSP are underrepresented in the existing historiography on peace activism in the Sixties. This dissertation has sought to validate the extensive recognition these women deserve, chiefly due to the long-term impact peace activism has had upon women's history. It is clear that peace activism did not only increase women's political consciousness, but was a catalyst for change and represented the eve of second-wave feminism. WSP women were not initially a feminist organisation, but their exposure to feminist views and their involvement in the peace movement certainly influenced their ideology and encouraged a change in their behaviour. Politicisation and increasing feminist sentiment, instead of distracting WSP from their cause, in fact made individual women more passionate about their right to determine foreign policy, and to challenge the administration.

¹⁸² Bloodworth, *Losing the Center*, p. 158.

¹⁸³ Gertzog, *Congressional Women*, pp. 171-177.

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