

MISS CHRYSTAL MACMILLAN 1872-1937

EDINBURGH WOMAN AND GLOBAL CITIZEN

DOUBLE GRADUATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,

FEMINIST, PEACE ACTIVIST, BARRISTER



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Fifteen questions about Miss Chrystal Macmillan 1872-1937

Q1. What do we know about her family?

Chrystal Macmillan was born in 1872; she was the second child with eight brothers. Her father was a successful business partner in the Melrose Tea Company, a long established Edinburgh business.

Mr John Macmillan bought the old house in Corstorphine which he extended and modernised, giving it a Scots Baronial makeover¹, including several magnificent turrets in



John and Jessie Macmillan with their nine children c1888
Photo courtesy Macmillan family

1891. The property was set amongst the fields of the countryside on the outskirts of Edinburgh, and it was several years before the trams ran out this far from the city centre. In 1913 the family sold the property to Edinburgh Corporation who gifted it to Edinburgh Zoological Society to provide land for the Edinburgh Zoo.²

In 1890 at the time of the photograph, the Macmillan family enjoyed a comfortable lifestyle in the large house on Corstorphine Hill.

Q2 What did Chrystal Macmillan do at school?

Chrystal Macmillan received her early education in Edinburgh but in 1888, when she was sixteen years old, she transferred as a boarder to St Leonards School in St Andrews. This newly established school had a radical approach to the education of girls and young women at a time when the common question was 'Of what use is learning to a woman?'³

With school support, Chrystal sat the Girton Entrance Examination for Oxford University in 1890 but was unable to take up the scholarship she was offered because her parents 'could not spare her from home', given that she was the only daughter in the family.

"This was a great grief to her, as at that time the Scottish universities did not admit women, except on the medical side, and a university education seemed closed to her".⁴

Q3 Was Chrystal Macmillan a good student at the University of Edinburgh?

When the Scottish Universities opened their full curriculum to women in 1892, Chrystal Macmillan was among the first to matriculate at University of Edinburgh, having passed the Preliminary Examinations in English, Mathematics, French, Dynamics and Science.⁵

We have no record of how her fellow students in Mathematics and Natural Philosophy, who were all men, reacted to having one woman in their class but if her reception was in any way similar to that of the early medical students then we can surmise that she did not receive a warm welcome. However this obviously had no effect on her academic abilities during her time as an undergraduate student as she won prizes in Mathematics, Chemistry, Astronomy and Natural Philosophy. In April 1896 she became the first woman to graduate with a degree in science from the University of Edinburgh, being awarded B.Sc. in Mathematics and Natural Philosophy with First Class Honours.

Despite her tutors encouraging her to continue her studies in mathematics, she returned to



Chrystal Macmillan, Graduate of the University of Edinburgh

Photo courtesy Macmillan family

the university, not to study further mathematics, but to study Moral Philosophy. It is interesting to note that during this period of study, she took a course in Commercial and Political Economy and Mercantile Law and won the 1899 essay prize in the subject – this may mark her initial interest in the legislative process. Right on the turn of the century, in 1900, Chrystal graduated with a second degree, an M.A in Moral Philosophy with second class honours.⁶

As an undergraduate, Chrystal found time to be involved in the student life at the University. She attended the first meeting of the Women's Representative Committee on 6th February 1895.⁷ Records show that she was frequently elected to chair the meetings, and was an enthusiastic participant in the female lobbying of the Scottish University authorities to permit women students to have equal access with male students to scholarships and bursaries. No doubt her speaking skills were honed in her other activities as Vice President of the Women's Debating Society.

Q4 What did Chrystal Macmillan do when she left the university?

After graduation, Chrystal started a period of study at Berlin University but was summoned home on sudden and unexpected death of her father in January 1901; and despite her academic potential, she took on the responsibility in the traditional female role of managing the family home on behalf of her brothers, the youngest of whom was fourteen years old.

As a middle class family with domestic servants to undertake many of the domestic duties, Miss Macmillan spent a minimum of time managing the household. She became an active member of the Scottish Federation of the National Union of Women Workers [NUWW] which was part of an international women's organization, the International Council of Women [ICW].⁸ She worked with Dr Maria Ogilvie Gordon of ICW, undertaking a survey of employers in Edinburgh and Leith asking them about opportunities for young people in industry and commerce.⁹ In 1907 Dr Gordon and Miss Macmillan appeared before a committee of the Edinburgh School Board, and using the information from the survey, they suggested that the Board should consider establishing an educational bureau where girls and lads on leaving school could have the benefit of advice on the choice of suitable occupation.¹⁰

She was also an active campaigner in Scotland for women's right to vote from 1900 to 1913 and worked for the Scottish Federation of Women's Suffrage Societies, under the leadership of Sarah Siddons Mair.¹¹ Although the campaign to gain the vote for women started in 1860's, women did not gain full Parliamentary franchise till 1928, and during those sixty years women worked through different campaigns and organisations in their efforts to convince men that women should have equal voting rights with men. Chrystal believed in furthering this cause by peaceful means and so was a suffragist rather than a militant suffragette.

Chrystal travelled all over Scotland, from Dumfries in the south¹² to the Orkney Islands in the north,¹³ speaking at public meetings and encouraging women to form local campaigning committees. According to her friend, Eunice Murray who hated chalking the pavements to announce suffrage meetings 'Chris didn't seem to mind. I looked over and there she was, her scarf floating gracefully behind her, not choking her as mine did, but most marvellous of all she was quite indifferent to the attentions of the crowd that surrounded her'.¹⁴ By 1908, Chrystal declared that she thought that she "had been born a suffragist".¹⁵

Q5 How did Chrystal Macmillan come to speak about women's suffrage in the House of Lords?

Before their abolition in 1950, a small proportion of seats in the House of Commons were elected to represent the interests of the old universities rather than geographical constituencies: in 1906, graduates of the Scottish universities were able to vote for two MPs. Chrystal and four other female graduates, Elsie Inglis, Frances Melville, Margaret Nairn and Francis Simson, applied to the Universities of Edinburgh and St Andrews for Parliamentary voting papers. The women argued that as they had been admitted to graduation and their names had been placed on the Register of the General Council, they

should be eligible for voting papers. They pointed out that they had attended and voted at the meetings of the General Council, and argued that they should be permitted to exercise all the privileges possessed by male graduates of the universities which included the right to vote in Parliamentary elections.¹⁶

The University of Edinburgh Registrar refused to issue voting papers and the women took their case to the Court of Sessions in Edinburgh. On behalf of all the Scottish universities, the Court of the University of Edinburgh took the lead in appointing legal advisers and barristers to defend vigorously their decision to refuse to issue voting papers to the women.¹⁷

After the women lost the case in the Edinburgh Court they were encouraged by other women graduates to test the decision by taking an appeal to the House of Lords. Although Counsel had advised the women against proceeding as it was thought that the women were unlikely to win the case, Miss Macmillan and her colleagues believed that they had a case. In a letter to Millicent Fawcett, Miss Macmillan wrote that “we are of the opinion that even if it were hopeless, the political effect of raising the question is worth the effort”.¹⁸

At the two hearings in 1908, in front of three Judges and a full public gallery, Miss Macmillan presented the women’s argument carefully in terms of the legal statutes and the historical



Chrystal Macmillan at the Bar of the House of Lords 12 November 1908
Daily Chronicle 13 November 1908

precedents. Several daily newspapers carried the story and reporters were so impressed by her capable presentation that Miss Macmillan became known as the “Scottish Portia”.¹⁹ In a letter to her friend Sylvia Murray, Miss Macmillan wrote modestly, “I don’t know how I did so well. It is the special providence which looks after suffragists”.²⁰ However Lord Alness, in writing her obituary, noted that his colleague Mr Dankwertz had remarked that it was “one of the best speeches he had heard delivered in the House of Lords”.²¹

It took the Law Lords one month to make a decision, and when it came, it was no

surprise that they had found that “the Parliamentary Franchise has always been confined to men and therefore the word ‘person’ referred to a ‘male person’ and did not include ‘woman’. However the graduate women had taken the opportunity to show their capabilities in compiling and presenting a well-argued case. “It was a dramatic new gesture, without use of violence, in the fight for women’s franchise”.²²

Q6 Why did Chrystal Macmillan belong to so many women's organisations?

In seeking equality with men, Chrystal found her way barred: entry to the professions was impossible; legal rights within matrimony were severely curtailed; wages for women in industry were much lower than men's wages for similar work; and they were allowed no say in Parliamentary matters, neither as participants nor voters. There was much for a radical young woman to do.

As member of International Women's Council [IWC], Chrystal learned to campaign for women's representation on various local and national committees including the National Insurance Committees; she recommended that women to write to their MPs to ensure that there should be at least one woman Commissioner to administer the Mental Deficiency Act; she spoke in committee and at conference, urging the government to pass a measure to open the legal profession to women.²³



Chrystal Macmillan speaking
at IWSA Congress, Rome 1923

Photo courtesy Aletta Library, Amsterdam

In 1913, after a move to London, Chrystal worked closely with Millicent Fawcett on suffrage campaign of National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies [NUWSS]. That same year, she was elected secretary of the International Women's Suffrage Alliance [IWSA], a role which gave her access to an international network of women working to obtain the vote. Expanding her own network, Chrystal went on to found two international organisations, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom [WILPF] and Open Door International [ODI]: she also chaired national and international committees on Nationality of Married Women.

Q7 How did Chrystal Macmillan react to the start of World War I?

In July 1914, just prior to the declaration of war, the IWSA delivered an International Manifesto of Women to the Foreign Office and to the foreign Embassies in London, appealing for them to do all in their power to use international mediation to avert the war. The signatories of the manifesto on behalf of IWSA were Millicent Garrett Fawcett, First Vice President and Chrystal Macmillan, Recording Secretary.²⁴

However when war was declared in August, the members of NUWSS and IWSA threw themselves into work to relieve the poverty and distress of women and children caused by the disruptions in the labour market and the departure of men to the war. When the IWSA office set up a relief office to help women stranded by the war, Chrystal was responsible for assessing the applications of refugees.²⁵

After the fall of Antwerp in 1914, an 'appeal for help reached the IWSA office at midday on October 13th, and that very evening, four great railway trucks of food were shipped to Flushing...in the course of the afternoon Miss Chrystal Macmillan obtained the consent of the Government Departments concerned to the export of food (otherwise forbidden), facilities and remission of dues from the Port Authority and Customs, special wagons on the train, and special handling by the steamship company'.²⁶ By December 1914, Chrystal had travelled to Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Breda and Flushing to consult local relief committees and in UK she handled the press releases with appeals for money for the relief of 80,000 Belgian refugees.

The NUWSS accounts show that, by the end of October 1914, members had raised £3423 2s 3d which was used by Chrystal, assisted by Mary Sheepshanks, to provide further shipments of baby food and clothing for new-born infants.

Q8 What was Chrystal Macmillan doing at The Hague in 1915?

With the onset of war in August 1914, the women of the German section of the International Women's Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) felt that they had to cancel the International Congress which had been due to meet in Berlin in June 1915. Aletta Jacobs responded on behalf of the Dutch national committee, suggesting that the Congress could be held in Holland which was a neutral country.²⁷ In December 1914, Chrystal Macmillan wrote to all 26 suffrage societies in the Alliance urging them to agree to meet in Holland to 'discuss the principles on which peace should be made and, if so, to act internationally'; and suggesting that they might meet as individuals to avoid further conflict within the suffrage organisations.²⁸



Daily Express 28 April 1915

So in February 1915, Chrystal met in Amsterdam with women from Belgium, Germany and Holland to draft twelve resolutions for the alternative conference. The invitation to 'women of all nations', along with the preliminary three-day programme for an International Women's Congress to be held at The Hague, starting on 28 April, was published in *Jus Suffragii* on 1 March 1915.

Despite lack of support from the leaders of the suffrage organisations, and bitter criticism from the press, 180

British women applied for passports to attend the gathering. They did this despite the fact that travel across the North Sea and English Channel had become dangerous for all shipping. Germany declared the seas around Great Britain to be a war zone and all enemy ships in that areas were liable to submarine attack. In retaliation, Britain started to blockade all ships carrying goods for Germany and its allies: some British merchant ships started to carry neutral flags. The German government then decreed that its submarines would claim the right to the attack all ships in these waters, even those carrying neutral flags.

The British women planning to attend the conference had great difficulty obtaining passports from the Government: after some lobbying by Catherine Marshall, twenty were granted. The women made their way to the port at Tilbury where they awaited the next ferry to Holland. But, much to the glee of the British press, the British Government issued a new order closing the North Sea to all shipping and the women were unable make the crossing to Holland.

The press in Britain and America were critical of the women's efforts to continue international discussion in time of war: some encouraged their readers to laugh at the women and tried to belittle their efforts, calling them 'peacettes' and 'crankettes', terms reminiscent of previous efforts to disparage the women's campaign to gain the vote.²⁹

However three British women did reach the conference. Chrystal Macmillan had been working in Holland with the Dutch Committee in preparation for the conference since February 1915. She took on the role of chair of the Resolutions Committee for the Congress.

Approximately 1200 women attended the congress from 12 countries, including representatives from both belligerent and neutral countries: Austria (6), Belgium (5), Britain (3), Canada (2), Denmark (6), Germany (28), Hungary (9), Italy (1), Netherlands (1000), Norway (12), Sweden (12), and USA (47). Despite knowing of the dangers, the delegation of 42 American women led by Janet Adams set sail from New York on April 13th on the Noordam. They spent the time on board working on amendments to the resolutions for the conference. When they reached the English Channel they were stopped by British warships which held them there for four days without explanation, releasing them on 27th, just in time for them to reach the Congress on the first evening. French and Russian women were unable to attend.

The twenty resolutions from the 1915 Congress have a vibrancy that continues to resonate today. The resolutions agreed by the women reveal their overwhelming horror of the sufferings experienced by women and men in war. The women also prepared proposals on how action might be undertaken to move towards peace. They clearly defined the actions they expected of their governments, avoiding prescriptions based on political assessments of the balance of power, and focusing on concepts of international justice.



International Women's Congress at The Hague April 1915

Photo courtesy Aletta Library, Amsterdam

The women urged governments to begin peace negotiations based on principles of justice, which included respect for nationality and the use of arbitration, conciliation and international pressure on nations to seek pacific means to settle international disputes. They further recommended that there should be democratic control of foreign policy through a political system based on the equal representation of men and women.³⁰

The Report of the Congress, which runs to 325 pages, was compiled and written by Chrystal Macmillan: its straightforward and logical structure provided a model for future conferences.

Q9 Why was Chrystal Macmillan travelling across Scandinavia to Russia in 1915?

Toward the end of the Congress at The Hague, five delegates were elected to visit all the Heads of State in Europe and USA, taking the women's proposals for mediation toward peace. The five women divided into two teams. Three women from the neutral countries planned to visit each of the belligerent countries- Germany, Austria, Hungary, Italy, France and Great Britain. The other team of women from belligerent countries, including Chrystal Macmillan, visited statesmen in Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Russia. And together they proposed to gain an interview with the President of United States.



Peace Delegates to King of Norway, Christiania, 1915
Photo courtesy Aletta Library, Amsterdam

The women travelled by train and boat back and forward across Europe, talking with some leaders more than once, trying to keep in contact with each other by telegram. In all, fourteen countries were visited and the women delegates were received by 21 Ministers, two Presidents, one King and the Pope. The women worked with diplomats and civil servants to set up formal meetings with political leaders, but in each country they were also received by sympathetic politicians and academics and addressed public meetings to promote peaceful resolution of the conflict.³¹

The majority of people in each country insisted that their nation had gone to war in self-defence. Each accused the opposing side of signing secret treaties prior to the war and of military atrocities against civilians once war was declared. Initially the envoys expected that US President Wilson would be a good person to act as mediator but they found that German leaders did not consider him to be neutral as US industrial corporations were supplying munitions to Britain. Moreover several leaders in European countries gave notice that they did not consider President Wilson suitable as they believed he knew little of European political issues or European ways of working.

The envoys procured agreement from leaders in the belligerent countries that they would not oppose the calling of such a conference even though they could not call for such a meeting themselves. On October 15, 1915 the women envoys issued a Manifesto to the press in America, giving a brief description of their findings, emphasising that they had heard much the same words “in Downing Street as in Wilhelmstrasse, in Vienna as in Petrograd, in Budapest as in the Havre”.³² They showed that there was room for mediation if the political leaders willed it, and appealed to all political leaders to work out a way to stop the war. Sadly, however, no action was taken by any Head of State and the war continued unabated.³³

Q10 How did Chrystal Macmillan react to Treaty of Versailles in 1919?



Chrystal Macmillan and Jane Addams,
WILPF Congress, Zurich 1919
Photo Courtesy Aletta Library, Amsterdam

Chrystal continued to work for peace throughout World War I, helping to produce the newsletter *Internationaal*. The women from the International Congress at The Hague met again in Zurich in May 1919: they were unable to meet in Paris, near to the Versailles Peace Conference as German women were not allowed to travel in France.³⁴

On the first day of the Zurich Congress, the terms of the Treaty of Versailles were published and the women were shocked by the terms announced:

'The International Congress of Women expresses its deep regret that the terms of peace proposed at Versailles so seriously violate the principles on which alone a just and lasting peace can be secured, and which the democracies of the world have come to accept.

*By guaranteeing the fruits of secret treaties to the conquerors, the terms of peace tacitly sanction secret diplomacy, deny the principles of self-determination, recognize the victors to the spoils of war, and create all over Europe discords and animosities, which can only lead to future wars'.*³⁵

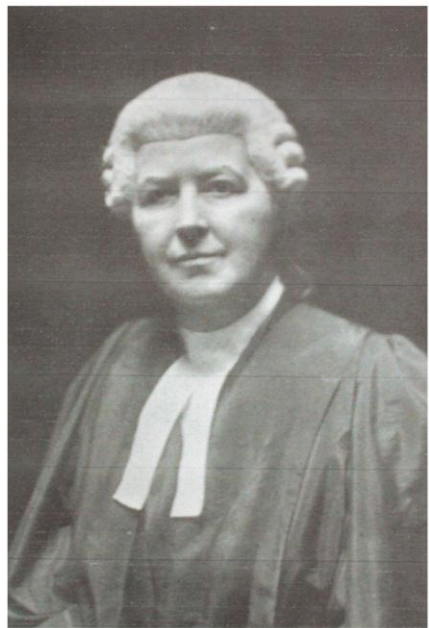
The women were horrified that statesmen were so little concerned about the widespread starvation in Germany, Austria and Hungary, brought about by the allied blockade. Chrystal Macmillan was one of five women elected to carry the resolutions from the women meeting in Zurich to present them to the men meeting at the Versailles Peace Conference. The women's delegation was received by some members of the Peace Conference but sadly their resolutions had little effect on the international negotiations.

Q11 When did Chrystal have time to become a barrister?

When the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act was passed in 1919, Chrystal was admitted to Middle Temple as a student at the age of 48 years: four year later she became the fourth woman to be called to the Bar in England.

She took several 'legal aid' cases, and according to Marshall Freeman, her one-time head of Chambers, "was never happier than when handling a case for the Poor Persons'

Department”³⁶: she also appeared for the defence in criminal cases on the Western Circuit and in London.



Chrystal Macmillan, Barrister
Photo courtesy of Macmillan Family

Chrystal Macmillan’s influence as a barrister went well beyond her court work; her advice was sought by many women’s organisations seeking to draft amendments to Bills. She showed an outstanding knowledge of the legal process, both in Great Britain and at international level, and used her expertise to think through the implications of legal reforms for women.³⁷

Following her death in 1937, a memorial fund was established by the Society of the Middle Temple to award an annual Chrystal Macmillan Memorial Prize to the most outstanding female legal student.³⁸

Q12 Why was Chrystal Macmillan reporting to the Codification Committee of the League of Nations on the Nationality of Married Women in 1930?

By 1920 the League of Nations was preparing for its first assembly. Women of WILPF presented copies of the resolutions of the Zurich Women’s International Congress in 1919 and put forward a number of proposals to make the new organisation more democratic. One proposal urged the League of Nations to establish a Commission of an equal number of women and men to investigate marriage and divorce laws as they affected marriage between persons of different nationalities: WILPF had already established a new committee to be chaired by Chrystal Macmillan to consider the legal issues affecting the nationality of married women.³⁹

In 1923, Chrystal Macmillan gave evidence to the British House of Commons Select Committee on the Nationality of Married Women:⁴⁰ she also addressed the International Law Association, urging them to endorse the legal principle that women should have the same right as men to choose their nationality.⁴¹ This was the start of her long public campaign to give women equal citizenship rights in relation to nationality.



Nationality of Married Women International
Committee 1930 The Hague
Photo Aletta Library, Amsterdam

In 1930, Chrystal Macmillan led a deputation to the Codification Conference at The Hague from an international demonstration on married women's nationality.⁴² The following year, Chrystal Macmillan gave evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee on the Nationality of Married Women and saw some progress in government legislation in Britain toward the principle 'that a woman herself shall be consulted as to any change of nationality and not be treated as a chattel'.⁴³

In response to feminist criticisms of proposed actions to resolve the problems arising from the Conflict of Nationality Laws, the League of Nations asked eight international women's organisations to form an advisory group, the Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality. In 1932 a major split of opinion between the British-based and American-based organisations led to the withdrawal of the British organisations, IFUW and IAWSEC and resignation of Chrystal Macmillan as Chair.⁴⁴ It was not until 1959 that there was international agreement on the nationality of married women, and residual issues relating to nationality of married women and the custody of children continue in conflict today.

Q13 When did Chrystal Macmillan become interested in economic issues?

Chrystal Macmillan had been a member of the Scottish Federation of the National Union of Women Workers [NUWW] since the early 1900's, working for women's equality with men in the labour market, including issues on 'equal pay for equal work'. The report of the 1903 NUWW conference lists resolutions on women's employment conditions, women's representation on school boards and other public bodies, and the employment of women inspectors in hospitals and prisons.⁴⁵

Chrystal Macmillan's passion for women's equality in economic issues had some basis in her personal experience. At a Conference in Hull in 1913, she moved the resolution 'That NCW of GB & Ireland urges Parliament to pass a measure to open the legal profession to women'. In her speech, Miss Macmillan noted that there was really no reason why women should not be lawyers, as it was an honest profession, a statement received with mingled laughter and cheers.⁴⁶

In 1926 when she became a member of the Board of the Open Door Council, Chrystal Macmillan began to focus more of her attention on women's equality in the work situation,

and after 1929, when she was elected president of Open Door International [ODI], her work for equality in the workplace took on an international perspective.

The object of the ODI was 'To secure that a woman shall be free to work and protected as a worker on the same terms as a man, and that legislation and regulations dealing with conditions and hours, payment, entry and training shall be based upon the nature of the work and not upon the sex of the worker. And to secure for a woman, irrespective of marriage, or childbirth, the right at all times to decide whether or not she shall engage in paid work, and to ensure that no legislation or regulations shall deprive her of this right'.⁴⁷

This is a firmer statement but similar to resolutions passed by the Women's Freedom League, the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, the Six Point Group and IWSA, that no restrictions should be placed on the work of women that was not also imposed on men's work⁴⁸.

Q14 How did Chrystal Macmillan come to lobby International Labour Organisation [ILO] in 1931?

During the 1930s all kinds of restrictions were being placed on women's employment so as to make more positions available for male workers: many countries were issuing new regulations to debar married women from work in teaching and administrative positions.⁴⁹



Women at ILO Office, Geneva January 1931

Chrystal Macmillan 4th from left

Photo courtesy Schlesinger Library

Miss Macmillan argued that new legislation which aimed to provide protection of women was in fact, leading to discrimination against women - the restriction on night working, heavy lifting and dangerous work meant that more women were excluded from well-paid work.⁵⁰ She presented the case that the ILO was failing in proper consideration of women's employment, pointing out that it was giving inadequate time for discussion with overcrowded

agendas and 'the equality of treatment for women is not made essential'.⁵¹

'Equal rights cannot be obtained so long as restrictions placed on woman as a worker make certain processes monopolies for men and so limit her choice of employment and drive her into, or prevent her escape from, the low grade, unskilled and less well paid employments'.⁵²

The women of Open Door International were challenged on their right to speak for working women, especially by the Trade Unions who held that international legislation was required to protect women industrial workers from exploitation by employers.⁵³ ODI argued that as there were few women representatives of industrial workers at the top levels of the Trade Union movement, many proposals for the protection of women were being put forward by men who would not necessarily understand women's claim of right to equality with men. Moreover they questioned how male negotiators could act on behalf of both men and women when, in the situation of growing unemployment, the male workers would benefit from the curtailment of women's right to negotiate equal pay and conditions.⁵⁴ The ODI promoted the idea that work should be undertaken to ensure that protection be extended for all workers.

Feminists continue today to explore the tension between a concept of gender equality where the same standard applies to women and men, and the alternative concept where standards are different for women and men but their contributions are equally valued.⁵⁵

Q15 What was Chrystal Macmillan like as a person?

Colleagues described her as a brave and gifted woman⁵⁶ with a brilliant and enlightened mind, who showed leadership in every enterprise she became involved in, inspiring and encouraging all those with whom she worked, especially younger women such as Gertrud Baer, joint chair of WILPF.⁵⁷ Her integrity and commitment to women's equality was never in question.

Frances Melville, her colleague from university days wrote that Chrystal could have become



Chrystal Macmillan 1933
Idun Stockholm

a brilliant academic mathematician but instead became a passionate advocate for women's equality.⁵⁸ Although she was a leading figure in international women's organisations, Chrystal's pioneering work was not always visible – "women will never know how much they owe her".⁵⁹ Despite her abilities as an able and humorous public speaker, her main work after 1920 was undertaken in committees and in the scrutiny of legislative reforms.

Her colleagues found her a strong personality who could be tiresome in her attention to detail: they complained that conference times could be extended by her insistence on arguing the case around a small amendment⁶⁰ but another acknowledged that she had an astonishing foresight in noticing legislative changes that would, in time, discriminate against women.⁶¹ One woman who found it difficult to work with her

in committee, described her actions as 'aiming straight ahead, without fear or hesitation, accomplishing what she considered just, without stopping to consider tactical questions, inflexible to such a point with her principles that she preferred to face up to an obstacle rather than go round it.'⁶² However a different version was given by a friend who saw Chrystal as 'an able politician who did not "beat her head against the stone wall"; rather she chiselled until the stone wall began to crumble'.⁶³ All seem agreed that she was able to divorce the person from the argument: she would present her argument forcefully but held no grudge if she lost the argument.⁶⁴

One of her colleagues in IWSA wrote that 'son étonnante puissance de travail et ses capacités d'organisatrice, ses qualités de loyauté, de courage, de persévérance poussée jusqu'à l'entêtement et sa conception si foncièrement anglo-saxonne du féminisme, qui s'alliait curieusement d'autre part à un très vif sentiment de la nécessité de la collaboration international.'^{65*}

She was acknowledged as an uncompromising feminist and a vigorous and staunch opponent of inequality between the sexes, a leader of the feminist movement. Marshall Freeman, the head of Middle Temple Chambers where she worked as a barrister, described her as 'an indefatigable worker, an ever helpful colleague... and untiring in her determination to secure justice if the opposite seemed to threaten.'⁶⁶

On her premature death at the age of sixty-five, the obituary in the Times noted that Chrystal Macmillan had been 'an ardent advocate, first of woman suffrage and then of the claim to equal citizenship of women'.⁶⁷ Her women friends exchanged emotional letters grieving at their great loss of a friend and colleague in the struggle for the cause of women's equality.

*Translation: her astonishing capacity for work, her abilities as an organiser, her qualities of loyalty. With courage and perseverance, pushed to the point of stubbornness, and her conception of feminism, so fundamentally Anglo- Saxon, which was curiously linked on the other hand to a lively awareness of the necessity for international collaboration.

This is work in progress. If you have any suggestions or questions about Chrystal Macmillan, please let us know. Contact Kaitlin Mc Cormick <s1143840@sms.ed.ac.uk>

Abbreviations

ICW	International Council of Women
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IWSA	International Women's Suffrage Alliance
NCW	National Council of Women
NUSEC	National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship
NUWW	National Union of Women Workers became NCW
NUWSS	National Union of Women Suffrage Societies
ODI	Open Door International
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

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