

Engendering city politics and educational thought: elite women and the London Labour Party, 1914-1965

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Abstract

This article uses biographical approaches to recover the contribution of hitherto neglected figures in the history of education and the political history of the Left in London. Place and location are important since it is important to grasp the uniqueness of the London County Council within the framework of English local government and of the London Labour Party within the framework of the Labour Party. In the 1920s and 1930s, under Herbert Morrison's leadership, the London Labour Party made a deliberate policy of encouraging able women to run for election to the London County Council, particularly those who had received a good education. By the 1950s Labour women were well represented in this public-sector site and the Education Committee was dubbed 'the Shrieking Sisterhood'. By this time, three women had been appointed to the chairmanship of the Education Committee (one Conservative and two Labour) and women formed the majority of its membership, although they lost ground after.

When a biographical approach is adopted a more spacious idea of politics emerges to accommodate hitherto neglected figures. This article tells the stories of two Labour women whose participation in English educational policy-making has been missed: Helen Bentwich (1893-1972) and Eveline Lowe (1869-1956). It is based largely on a new source of manuscript material, personal papers in the Women's Library at London Metropolitan University and the archive of Homerton College, Cambridge, and is part of a larger project examining the role of Labour women in London government. It contributes to revisionist debates about the place of women in the history of education, by providing new interpretations of urban education evolution that begin to appreciate the significance of women's political journeys and the impact of their involvement.

Introduction

In 1941, the ruling Labour Group asked 48-year-old Margaret Cole to join the London County Council (LCC) Education Committee.¹ A product of Roedean and Girton College, Cambridge, Cole was well known in policy circles, through her prominence in the Fabian Society. Her antecedents were intellectual and professional and in local politics she became London's foremost publicist of the comprehensive school. During her service she saw women in the majority on the Education Committee for the first time and four female leaders of the Council. Amid media speculation on the likely impact of 'Petticoat Government' and 'Petticoat Councillors' Cole expressed concern at the 'aggressive approach' and 'noisily assertive attitudes' of certain female colleagues, which had caused the Education Committee to be dubbed 'the Shrieking Sisterhood'.² These observations led me to conceptualize this article in terms of two aims. The first is to use biographical approaches to explore the outcome of this activity on the creation of educational policy from 1934, when Labour became the majority party at County Hall, to 1965, when the education powers of the LCC were transferred to the Inner London Education Authority. The second aim is to explore the links between gendered practice and discourses and personal action at a particular historical moment.

British politics has evolved in conjunction with masculinity, masculinism and patriarchy and women's mass mobilization has often been viewed as something of an anomaly.³ Historical analyses of policy imperatives, power structures and political discourse show the legacy of deeply held beliefs that politics was men's business, although it should be acknowledged that the structure of the British state provided limited space for women's participation even when women were excluded from parliamentary politics.⁴ Rather than assuming that women exerted little political influence revisionist historical accounts critique the failure to appreciate this and the contribution of women to political life. Traditionally it has been the case that education is one of the policy areas in which women have been able to wield power and influence. In the 1920s, for instance, two of the four female office-holders in the House of Commons were parliamentary secretary at Education and the only two women who reached the cabinet during 1945-59 were also at Education.⁵ For Margaret Thatcher, Conservative Prime Minister from 1979

to 1990, Secretary of State for Education and Science in Edward Heath's 1970 government, the post was part of her route to the top. But Thatcher's precursors in local government had already made their mark in the years before the national suffrage grant. Some ambitious, highly motivated middle-class women entered what was essentially a male world through voluntary societies, women's organisations and settlement houses, while the co-operative movement was one of the routes through which working-class women became politicized. By the mid 1890s, British women could vote for and be elected to school boards, the boards of the poor-law guardians, parish councils, rural district councils and urban district councils, besides London vestries. As Thane points out, 'In no other major state in Europe or America did women have a comparable institutional role at such an early date'.⁶ Here was one area where activist women could assert their gender identity and affect the lives of many through their achievements in community politics, poor law administration and municipal government.

Taking London as a case study, this article tells the stories of two Labour women whose participation in English educational policy-making has been missed: Helen Bentwich (1893-1972) and Eveline Lowe (1869-1956). Biographical approaches are used to attach the history of education to the study of Labour politics and history. To explore the vision of two significant Labour women, to consider the set of ideological and political desiderata that framed the contexts in which they were acting and the policies they pursued. These subjects were chosen because of their long and effective careers on the LCC. They both chaired the education committee, serving in that capacity in the years 1934-7 and 1947-50 respectively. Just months before the outbreak of World War Two, Lowe made history as the first woman to attain the role of Council chairman. Bentwich was the fourth woman to hold that office.⁷ The article is divided into four parts. The first part takes a brief look at the organisation of the London Labour Party (LLP). In so doing it will focus on the role of Herbert Morrison and the impact of Labour women on city politics and educational thought. Moving on, the conceptual legacy of Pierre Bourdieu is used as a framework within which to explore the making of political women. Although some feminists have hesitated about appropriating the insight and analysis of male theorists, many of whom have historically ignored feminist work, the approach represented here is a kind of critical engagement or strategic reading that tries to bring a

‘feminist consciousness’⁸ to bear on his writing. Part two looks at the early lives and political beginnings of these female politicians, local and biographical sources have been used to present a more spacious idea of politics emerges to accommodate hitherto neglected figures. The final sections use a historical methodology to explore their careers as educational policy-makers.

Labour Party Organisation

The LCC Education Committee was the most singularly visible of all English local education authorities. Nearness to Fleet Street and national television meant that political actions occurred under the close scrutiny of changing administrations in the central government and were reported on by the media. Its physical location within the capital had repercussions upon the politicians themselves. The acrimonious disputes between central and local government involving the educational work of its forerunner, the London School Board, were not forgotten. The Education (London) Act, 1903, abolished the School Board and transferred its powers to the LCC (created in 1888) which then became responsible for the consolidation of elementary education and its linking with a system of secondary schools, plus the expansion of technical and further education.⁹ Initially two political groupings dominated London government. These were the Moderates (changed in 1907 to the Municipal Reform Party) closely allied to the Conservative associations, and the Progressives, described by Hobsbawm as a ‘broad liberal coalition of small businessmen and traders, non-conformists and working radicals.’¹⁰ In addition, there were the socialist societies whose origins lay back in the 1880s and 1890s: the Social Democratic Federation, the Independent Labour Party and the Fabians. This is the context in which to situate the Labour Party organization in London which came into being in 1914.

Herbert Morrison became secretary of the new LLP in 1915 and presided over the period of growth that was to follow. The most striking change in the party balance on the LCC after the First World War was the annihilation of the Progressives but Morrison faced a number of organisational and psephological considerations. First, there was the obvious problem of the capital’s huge scale and diversity. Secondly, Labour historians

have emphasised the occupational and geographical fragmentation in London with casual labour drawn to the docks and small-scale workshops located in the south and east, the increasing number of white-collar and professional workers living in the main in the suburbs.¹¹ Finally, a lack of any localized commitment to a religious tradition and the successive waves of immigration from Europe and Ireland from the 1880s served to further complicate matters. Morrison was quick to appreciate the implications. Whilst he did not take the political allegiance of the working class for granted, throughout the inter-war period he sought to negotiate a political programme with which to capture the property-owning, ratepayer vote. This is evidenced by the commitment to financial rectitude tempered by social responsibility and the emphasis on a strong, centralized party machine. Within the framework of the Labour Party as a whole, the LLP enjoyed a unique independence and power.

It was an integrated political party affiliated to the Labour Party nationally and responsible for its own finances. Structurally, it was a small-scale replica of the national party, with an executive committee as its highest organ, elected by and answerable to an annual conference.¹²

Consequently, it sent delegates to the annual conferences and the annual conferences of labour women's sections. It could amend its own constitution, subject only to endorsement by the National Executive Committee. So great was the influence and prestige of the Labour hierarchy at County Hall that the LLP earned the sobriquet the 'LCC Labour Party.'

Besides largely engineering the above, Morrison has been singled out as a patron of 'able' women. He appreciated their role in 'caring for' the labour community, including the drudgery of envelope addressing, leaflet distribution, fundraising, canvassing and organising social events. Bureaucratic, utilitarian and with a reputation as an expert dancer, he used the party socials to win key women over. As Helen Bentwich, then a member of the Labour Candidates Association later recalled:

While dancing, he said he wanted to put me on the list of candidates for the next London County Council election, in 1934. Despite being a conscientious reader of the 'Daily Herald'

I was still more interested in international affairs than in ‘bread and butter politics’, and was quite ignorant of the work of local councils. I firmly declined, and he as firmly insisted. By then I had trodden on his feet so often, being a singularly unskilled dancer, that I felt the only way I could adequately apologise for my clumsiness was to agree to be a candidate. Had I been a more skilled dancer, my life from then on, would have been on different lines.¹³

Considerable success was scored in the 1919 LCC election, the first to be fought by the LLP. Fifteen Labour candidates were elected, where formerly only two had sat. In 1934, the party gained control by winning 69 of the 124 seats and women represented an impressive 23 per cent of the Labour councillors, compared with 8 per cent of the Municipal Reformers, ousted after 27 years of rule.¹⁴ But Helen Bentwich was not among them. She lost the St Pancras contest. Three years after the 1931 debacle at Westminster, the victorious Labour politicians saw themselves as pioneers, believing that their success or failure would affect the prospects of the Party nationally. For the next six years Morrison led the LCC during which time he also continued as secretary to the LLP. Before his entry into the national Government in 1940 he appointed a number of women politicians from the LLP executive to LCC chairmanships (*sic*) including Eveline Lowe to education. With 38 elected and 12 co-opted members (who lacked voting powers), education was the largest committee, held public meetings in its own meeting room, with printed and published agendas. Margaret Cole, for one, felt they were more effective than parliamentary politicians: ‘We do not work ourselves into frenzies of excitement or lay elaborate procedural traps for our opponents; we do not hang around for hours doing nothing ... We are assembled to get things done’.¹⁵ Was she right? What was the outcome of this activity?

First, Bourdieu’s economic metaphors will be used to unpack the different forms of power and relationships that helped the prospects of women in politics. Bourdieu understands society as made up of ‘fields of power’. A field is a social arena which functions according to its own tacit logic or set of rules. Acceptance as a legitimate player of the game is achieved by access to different forms of capital - economic, cultural and social.¹⁶ If and when the different forms of capital are accepted as legitimate they take the form of symbolic capital. ‘Legitimation is the key mechanism in the conversion to

power.¹⁷ Field positions are constituted in social relations, while the habitus suggests how social practice can be regulated without being the product of obedience to rules.

Reay notes that just what Bourdieu meant by habitus may be analysed in terms of four interrelated aspects. First of all, habitus as embodiment and secondly, habitus as a deeply ingrained framework of durable, transposable dispositions that relate to ways of seeing and being within the world. Thirdly, habitus as a compilation of collective and individual trajectories and finally habitus as a complex interplay between past and present.¹⁸ Exploring habitus as a methodological tool, she calls on educational researchers to put ‘habitus into practice’ as a way of interrogating their data. This heuristic model of social topography enables a focus on the particular conditions and possibilities for inclusion or exclusion, based on the attribution of value, in local symbolic forms of exchange. For instance, if one thinks of the value of femininity in relation to the way one performs being a politician one can see the link with habitus as described above, in as much as it inscribes the individual with a repertoire of practices, with a history, that facilitate or otherwise the conversion into the symbolic. In this respect, Reay notes that Bourdieu provides a formula that stresses the implication of the inter-relationship of all three concepts: ‘(Habitus X Capital) + Field=Practice’.¹⁹ So, as the next section will show, the volume and composition of their capital operates as a resource in the making of political women, providing the basis for an understanding of political journeys as movements through metaphorical social space.

The Making of Women Politicians: early lives and political strategies

Helen Bentwich (née Franklin) and Eveline Lowe (née Farren) were both Londoners. Lowe, the eldest of seven children, was born in Bermondsey in 1869. The daughter of a Congregational minister, she was educated in nonconformist foundations which enabled the acquisition of cultural capital. On completion of her teacher training course at Homerton College, she established an effective career as lecturer, senior woman lecturer and then vice-principal, having supervised the move from East London to a new campus on the outskirts of Cambridge. The published history records that Eveline ‘was as

understanding with the students as she was capable in her teaching,²⁰ but she retired on her marriage to George Carter Lowe (died 1919), a veterinary surgeon who lived and worked in Bermondsey. Her new husband was President of the Bermondsey Adult School and helper at the philanthropic settlement house established there in 1898 with the support of Leys School, Cambridge, a Wesleyan educational institution, and nonconformist professors and students at the university. The neighbourhood was deemed 'needy' since neither the localities labelled slums nor the cultures of their inhabitants had received the same level of attention as the dissolute residuum of London's East End. Nearness to Guy's Hospital, whose medical students would play a role, plus good transport links to suburbia for other wealthy helpers, were further attractions. The aims of the settlement were four-fold. Firstly, it was to allow scope for community and social work and secondly for participation in reform politics. Thirdly, it was to establish an educative space and finally to initiate research into social problems. As Kathleen Woodward laments in her autobiographical account of a working-class childhood set in pre-First World War Bermondsey, 'Oh, then it was easy to re-mould the world!'²¹

Eveline Lowe was one of many touched by this philosophic idealism. In the 1900s she set up women only classes in English literature and a Settlement Reading Circle. This teaching and learning worked alongside local lectures organised by the growing University Extension Movement. Simultaneously, she helped form the Old Homertonian Association. These networks of relationships and activities exemplify what Dyhouse suggests we may designate a "'women's culture", or at least, a "feminine subculture" on the margins of college life'.²² Lowe involved Homerton students as helpers in girls' clubs, attempts to direct poor working-class children's play and vacation schools. In 1928, she established a London Study Group to consider and discuss educational and social problems. Meanwhile she looked to state structures and systems to deal with the material effects of slum-dwelling. She was early elected a member of the Bermondsey Board of Guardians responsible for the administration of poor relief (in 1905), a founder member of the Women's Labour League founded to support the British Labour Party (in 1906) and the Bermondsey branch of the Independent Labour Party (ILP, in 1908). Her husband played a leading role as did their closest friends and fellow settlement workers Ada (1868-1942) and Alfred Salter (1873-1945).

The Salter's were Quakers, pacifists, teetotal and vegetarian. They met because Alfred turned his back on a promising research career for medical practice among the Bermondsey poor and Ada left a comfortable country home to become a settlement worker. Having re-qualified as a medical practitioner, George Lowe was now in partnership at Salter's surgery. The diffuse religiosity that came to permeate the Bermondsey ILP is outlined here by Salter's biographer:

They were concerned to save human beings from the horrors of the poverty they knew in Bermondsey, to create social conditions which would allow the children to grow in physical, mental and spiritual health, and to spread among the people the spirit of fellowship, service and equality. To Alfred Salter and his comrades Socialism was a religion.²³

In 1909 Alfred Salter lost the West Bermondsey parliamentary by-election and the group decided to concentrate on local politics. A year later Ada became the first woman councillor in London and in 1919 Bermondsey became a Labour council. Within weeks of the victory celebrations George Lowe was dead, of a septic throat, contracted from a patient. This was a turning point in the public life of Eveline Lowe. Charles Ammon (another founder member of Bermondsey ILP) asked her to join the LCC Education Committee as a co-opted member and in 1922 she became an LCC member having gained one of the two West Bermondsey seats. In 1925 Ada Salter was her running mate and the two women represented the constituency for the next sixteen years. Ada retired in 1941. Eveline retired five years later. Her influence and prestige was acknowledged when she became the first Honorary Freeman of the Borough of Bermondsey - 43 years after she began married life in the two-storey house in Thorburn Square, Bermondsey, the home she later shared with her unmarried sister and brother.

Helen Bentwich was born into the Franklin family in 1892, the fifth of six children embracing four brothers and one sister.²⁴ Albeit not among the upper strata of Sephardi Jews, the oldest Jewish families in England, or the wealthiest of the Ashkenazis from northern Europe, the Franklins were well within the Anglo-Jewish elite known as 'The Cousinhood', so common was intramarriage.²⁵ It is possible to trace high levels of economic and cultural capital. Helen's father, Arthur Ellis, was a merchant banker, besides being involved in Jewish communal and general charitable work. Prior to her

marriage her mother, Caroline Jacob, attended Bedford College, one of the new colleges associated with the nineteenth century women's movement. Nonetheless, she married at nineteen, as was the custom and later became involved in numerous organisations and reform movements, including the Jewish League for Women's Suffrage, the Anglo-Jewish Association and the Brady Clubs and Settlement for Youth in East London. A board school manager in the 1890s, she was co-opted to the Buckinghamshire Education Committee in 1902 and served until her death in 1935. Her example inspired Helen. Looking back, she wrote: 'for all her activities, she was a wonderful mother, never letting her public work stand in the way of the welfare of her children.'²⁶

Growing up in the 1900s, Helen chaffed against her father's Victorian ideal of womanhood. Her favourite dream was that she'd 'only just been born, and someone said: "A mistake has been made. It's a boy, not a girl."' ²⁷ Professional help proved a conspicuous failure since she simply screamed at the counsellor, though her father bowed to pressure for her attend the elite St Paul's Girls School, followed by Bedford College. By which time the Franklins, traditionally supporters of the Liberal Party, had prominent connections in parliamentary politics in the person of Uncle Herbert Samuel, the first practicing Jew appointed to the British Cabinet.²⁸ While this could be of great value leading to the future accumulation of social capital, Helen followed her elder siblings Alice and Hugh, into the Labour Party. Alice was then honorary secretary of a young intellectual group called the 'Utopians', whose president was H.G. Wells. Helen remembered 'meetings were often held in our house, and I, an untidy schoolgirl, would creep in at the back unnoticed, when I should have been doing my homework. By the time I was fourteen, I declared myself a Socialist too.'²⁹ Along with her choice of political home, Alice's outer appearance - 'cropped hair and pinstriped clothes' was unconventional and she shared 'a flat with a women partner in an arrangement about which the family made no comment.'³⁰ In contrast, their father did not remain silent over Hugh's militant suffragism. He gained widespread publicity over his attempt to strike the then home secretary Winston Churchill with a dog whip, because he held him responsible for the police brutality which met the protesters in a suffrage demonstration in November 1910. For this and other offences, Hugh was imprisoned three times, and was forcibly fed, apparently over a hundred times, until his release on licence under the Prisoners

(Temporary Discharge for Ill-Health) Act.³¹ Ultimately his father cut him out of his will possibly for marrying out of the Jewish faith.

The Franklins traveled extensively and it was during a family tour of the Middle East that Helen rekindled a friendship with Norman Bentwich. After they got engaged her mother suggested she study domestic science which she did, but soon found it boring. Instead, she preferred to lie on Hampstead Heath, writing letters to Norman. According to Helen, saying 'yes' to a domestic servant who asked if she might run their household seemed 'a much better arrangement than learning how to do it myself.'³² After their marriage in 1915 they lived prosperously in Cairo, where Norman worked as a law lecturer, but Helen returned to England when he joined the British army. As she wrote her mother:

Of course, Norman's people have very old-fashioned ideas, and think that once a girl is married, she ought to go back, just in case Norman wants to see me sometimes. But fortunately he is more modern, and doesn't have such mid-Victorian views of matrimony. However, they don't air theirs, and I don't air mine much, so we get on very well indeed.³³

Disqualified for war service on the grounds of poor eyesight, Hugh now served on the staff of the munitions factories at Woolwich.³⁴ With his help, plus a reference from Uncle Herbert, Helen got a job as a forewoman there. Convinced that its female workforce was overworked and underpaid she was horrified by the distressing suicide of a male worker during a hot and stuffy night shift. When letter writing failed to provoke a response from the authorities she tried to form a branch of the National Federation of Women Workers. Either dismissed outright or forced to resign, she got a dressing down from Hugh but used her familial network with a visit to Alice, now high up at the Board of Agriculture. From this she went on to become the successful organiser of the Women's Land Army in the Home Counties.³⁵

The 1920s were spent in Palestine since Norman was attorney-general in the mandate government. There she combined the political hostess role with communal activities in the field of education besides serving as honorary secretary of the feminist-inclined Palestine Council of Jewish Women. Between 1931 and 1951, the couple maintained homes in London, Kent and Jerusalem, where Norman was professor of

international law at the Hebrew University. This positioning and engagement in public activity demonstrates a very particular gendered habitus underpinned by high levels of economic, social and cultural capital. Helen joined the Labour Party soon after her return to London, supporting Hugh as he unsuccessfully contested the parliamentary seats of Hornsey in 1931 and St Albans in 1935. Meanwhile Hugh arranged for her to meet Jim Middleton, the secretary of the Labour Party, who invited her to join the list of prospective parliamentary candidates. She twice stood unsuccessfully for Parliament but in the spring of 1934 received a late night phone call from Eveline Lowe, inviting her to become a co-opted member of the Education Committee. Hugh was among the members but given an hour to decide she sought her mother's advice:

She strongly recommended me to accept saying I could always resign after a year if I was not enjoying the work. When I told Mrs Lowe that I would accept, she said she wanted me to be vice-chairman of the Teaching Staff Sub Committee of the Education Committee, and Chairman of the section which interviewed prospective head teachers. She told me it would be hard work ... In the event, it was very hard work.³⁶

Helen quickly became 'completely absorbed' in local government work and lost all desire to become an MP. In 1937 she obtained the nomination of North Kensington Labour Party after a 'stormy' adoption meeting.³⁷ While she was waiting 'a man came hurtling, head first, down the stairs, followed by a number of chairs, and a frightened secretary who said I had better go home, and that they had decided to adopt me.'³⁸ Victorious at the polls, Helen served continuously either as alderman or as member of the LCC until her retirement in 1965. She was appointed chairman of the Education Committee in 1947, serving in that capacity until 1950, and promoted the establishment of comprehensive secondary schools.

Working with the biographical data to delineate the frame of inscription which sets limits on the possibilities for the making of women politicians, one can see that the value of these two women's capitals was realizable and able to be converted in the political field. Clearly the composition of their social capital had the potential to enhance their access to local politics.³⁹ Obviously both Lowe and Bentwich had economic capital allowing them to attend Council meetings which usually meant being in County Hall

from about one o'clock to an unspecified hour in the afternoon or evening (it was only when payment for lost earnings was allowed in 1948 that the first members from unskilled manual occupations were elected). Significantly, they embodied a particular version of middle-class moral femininity which was also symbolically legitimate in the political field. This can be seen in their adoption of particular styles and modes of presentation. Arguably, whereas Eveline had stronger institutional cultural capital with which to trade as an educator activist, this was balanced by Helen's higher levels of economic and social capital. Moving from the individual to the collective, through networks and group membership, shows the importance of family and community to a microanalysis of political influence within the Labour movement. But how did they put their ideas into practice? How effective were they in achieving their goals?

The Evolution of Urban Education 1: Eveline's Story

During the 1920s Eveline Lowe was a regular contributor of descriptive articles in the monthly journal, the *Bermondsey Labour Magazine*.⁴⁰ She campaigned vigorously against Conservative attempts to cut education spending during the depression, including Lord Eustace Percy's Circular 1371 which would have meant a cut of £100,000 in expected grants to London.⁴¹ In February 1926, she criticised Memorandum 44 issued by the Board of Education. Among other things this proposed an average class size of 50, whereas the LCC had set 40 as its target, and meant the abandonment of London's new programme of school building.⁴² In the face of near unanimous objection both documents were withdrawn though cuts in educational expenditure remained high on the Conservative government agenda.⁴³

Lowe's opposition to educational 'economy' quickened after the election of a second Labour government in June 1929. Preparing the ground for a change in the general direction of education policy, she wrote a series of articles supporting proposals to raise the school leaving age to fifteen, the expansion of nursery schooling and improved dentistry services. She also drew attention to the injustice of a narrow scholarship ladder for the poor alongside hidden subsidies for the rich. In a piece

demanding more maintenance grants, she publicised the fact that while fees for the LCC secondary schools (mainly a middle class preserve) averaged £12 a year the actual cost per child was about £42, leaving a net shortfall of £30. This was over £13 more than the annual sum spent on an elementary school child.⁴⁴ The crisis of 1930-31 triggered further economy drives and Lowe protested against Circular 1421, issued by the Board of Education in September 1932. This reversed the 1907 Free Place Regulation which reserved up to 25 per cent of secondary provision for scholarship pupils and directed local authorities to charge secondary schools fees in line with parents' 'ability to pay'. This time Lowe focused on the fact that many public school endowments originally intended for the poor were being used for the education of rich children. She could only assume the Circular was 'based on the jealousy of the wealthier classes who have been accustomed to possess a monopoly of the more desirable jobs, and who are feeling the competition of scholars coming from the poorer people.'⁴⁵

There were some significant changes in London education after Eveline Lowe attained the committee chair. Within days, Empire Day in the schools was renamed Commonwealth Day. Another priority was the restoration of annual school prizes and a two week annual holiday for residential school children.⁴⁶ At the same time the Labour council pressed the National government of 1931-35 to restore a ten per cent cut in teachers' salaries and to raise the school leaving age to fifteen. When the Education Committee was asked to report on post-primary education in London, Lowe delegated the task to a special Joint Section consisting of Labour and Conservative members of the Elementary Education and Higher Education Subcommittees with Hugh Franklin as chair. Its twelve Labour members included Helen Bentwich and spanned three influential bodies concerned with education policy: the Labour Party's Advisory Committee on Education (Franklin and Barbara Drake), the Fabian Society (Drake, Franklin) and the National Association of Labour Teachers (T.H. Jones and Mary O'Brien Harris). Formed in 1927, the Association was especially strong in London and had two main objectives. First, a common school for all children over the age of eleven, second and related to this, the destruction of the distinct and separate grammar and modern (or central) school traditions, and their merging within a common, but highly variegated syllabus.⁴⁷ During the winter of 1934-5 meetings were held at which London's Education Officer, urged the

merits of the existing system, and critics like Franklin promoted the idea of the multilateral school.⁴⁸ They produced a report which recommended a unified system of post-primary provision for London under a single regulatory control. Admission to each secondary school would be automatic and non-selective and each child would receive a common schooling up to the age of fourteen. It was hoped and expected that the establishment of a new type of secondary school would 'help to break down any prejudices which may exist regarding the relative merits of one type of post-primary education as compared with another.'⁴⁹ According to Bentwich, the report was 'put into storage' due to its implications for grammar school teachers with their preferential salaries, holidays and conditions of service.⁵⁰

The three-year programme for London education introduced under Eveline Lowe had two priorities. These were to increase the level of secondary school provision and secure improvements in the standard of elementary schooling, while demonstrating to the electorate Labour's care with public spending. Acting in this context, Lowe announced plans to build thirty new schools and renovate and modernize a further sixty-two. Concomitant with the provision of extra teaching staff she claimed these changes would mean a decrease in class sizes. The policy pursued also put emphasis on improved medical services including nutritional advice, besides adding some rungs to the educational ladder by increasing the number of LCC scholarships. According to Lowe, 900 extra children were awarded scholarships to secondary schools in the first two years of Labour control.⁵¹

Generally, Lowe was considered to have done a good job at Education although she did not go far enough for some like the 'critical Mrs Drake' niece of the Fabian Beatrice Webb.⁵² In keeping with the Morrisonian policy of rotating the chairmanships among the LLP executive Lowe was appointed chairman of the Establishment Committee in 1937. Two years later Morrison nominated her for election as the first woman chairman of the Council:

I ask the Council to believe that, in this choice that we of the Majority have made for this highest office in the gift of the Council, the fact that Mrs Lowe is a woman has not influenced us one way or the other. She is being nominated for this office on grounds of her personal competence and fitness for the office and, if we didn't feel that she was competent

and fit for the office, we would not be nominating her to-day. Nobody will be more pleased to hear that than Mrs Lowe herself, for there could be no greater insult to such an able woman than that we should put her in that Chair merely as a solace to womankind and to keep them sweet and keep us out of trouble.⁵³

In response, Lowe welcomed Morrison's public assurance that she had not been chosen on the grounds of her sex. She continued:

I should not have been very happy had I felt that that was the case, and I very much appreciate the public announcement that the Council has put me here because I really am considered to be a suitable person for the job and not because you think it is time there should be a woman.⁵⁴

To a large extent her approach was a reflection of party orthodoxy and she clearly felt that women had come a long way since her election as a Poor Law Guardian over thirty years ago. Then the Chairman, an 'oldish man', acclaimed: 'We are very pleased to welcome Mrs Lowe as the second woman to our Board, but we hope there won't be too many of them.'⁵⁵ And yet, she made reference to her pioneer status hoping 'you won't regret that you have put a woman into this Chair, and that you won't regret in the future that other women shall follow.'⁵⁶

The associated press coverage only served to emphasize the persistence of certain gender scripts. For example, much play was made of the fact that Lowe was to be addressed as 'Sir' and 'Mr Chairman'. Headlines like 'Proud to be Woman "Dictator"' were juxtaposed with descriptions of her as being 'nearly in tears' at the thought of having to give up her work as chairman of the Higher Education Committee: a woman who 'mothers' her brother and sister and is 'now to be "mother" to London's millions', a woman who is 'very good about the house', a woman who 'shops and cooks' and 'then gets on with her Council work.'⁵⁷ In particular this suggests a very specific gendered and classed habitus. So, how did Helen Bentwich approach the office in the 1950s? Had anything changed?

The Evolution of Urban Education 2: Helen's Story

Like Eveline Lowe, Helen Bentwich was a staunch Labour Party loyalist. Unlike Lowe, she encouraged a more radical approach to the problems of educational reform pressing for an end to the two-tier system of elementary and secondary education. It was her belief 'that England would be a happier and a more united country if all children met on equal terms in the classroom and the idea of class education were abolished.'⁵⁸ In various speeches reported in the 1930s and 1940s, she requested the availability of necessary resources to provide free education for all 'who had the ability to benefit from it' from nursery to university. She condemned the class inequalities in education, advocated the abolition of private education and stressed the importance of equality of opportunity. In particular, she wanted to see greater emphasis put on the education of the 'normal' or 'ordinary' child. By whom she meant the 70 per cent majority, the overwhelmingly working class pupils who were either left behind in the senior elementary schools or selected for a place in one of the Council's fifty-one central schools. There pupils received a free education from the age of eleven up to age of fifteen, with a strong industrial or commercial content. As she told members of the Harrow Labour Party: 'It was only possible to realise that Socialistic state when they had completely educated the normal children of the vast masses of the country.'⁵⁹ In a talk on 'The Education of the London Child' given to members of the Parents' Council at Furzedown Demonstration School in February 1936, she 'emphasized the value of educational visits, concerts, educational films, broadcast lessons, physical training, art and handicrafts. She also referred to the ... homework classes, child guidance clinics, stammering classes, and the work of the school medical service.'⁶⁰

In these years she gave positive encouragement to able women with the time and opportunity to enter politics. But like her mentor, Lowe, she opposed separatist women's organisations. In a letter to her mother dated January 8th 1925, she gave the reasons for her resignation from the Women Zionists. On a political level she 'was never really at ease with it' owing to her dislike of separatist "Women Only" organisations.⁶¹ Delivering a talk seven years later, she told her audience that the days of 'women's committees' and 'women's enterprises' were over. The tensions and ambiguities within her feminism were

invoked in her analysis of women in English politics. On the one hand, she said ‘We must not have women’s representatives; we must educate women to elect men, and men to elect women, where they are the best personalities available, as is done today in countries where feminism, as such, no longer exists.’ On the other, on the question of whether it is harder for a woman than a man to stand for Parliament she concluded:

Personally, I think that it is. Not necessarily because of anti-feminism; but because wherever a woman has been tried, and failed, prejudice is engendered against the women. Whereas, when men candidates fail, it does not debar other men being chosen in their place. Every individual woman must accept responsibility for her. It is analogous to the position of the Jews.⁶²

In her unpublished memoirs of late 1931 onwards, Bentwich tells many amusing stories of her early political experiences. For instance, in the 1931 general election she offered to be Hugh’s chauffeur. At an open air meeting one Saturday night, he suddenly bent down and told her she would have to carry on since his other speaker hadn’t shown up. Turning to the crowd he announced ‘that his sister, recently returned from Russia would now speak’ and as he made way for her to climb up on to the portable platform whispered ‘don’t answer any drunks!’⁶³ Heeding his advice, she held the crowd until the awaited speaker arrived. In the years that followed she became an effective public speaker, honing her skills at campaign meetings all over London and beyond. At one Kent village the audience was tiny. Leaving the hall in the dark after, ‘shadowy figures appeared to clasp our hands and to say: “we’re with you, but we dursn’t be seen at your meetings.”’ Some parts of rural England were still feudal in the early 30s she wrote.⁶⁴

Interestingly, the unpublished manuscript materials show evidence of discrepancy between public statements and private thoughts. Publicly she said women politicians were ‘rapidly losing their “news-value.” They are no longer, as Dr Johnson said of a woman preaching “something outside nature, like a dog walking on its hind legs.”’⁶⁵ Privately she noted her disappointment that her speeches were never reported during parliamentary election campaigns. Instead there were constant photographs of her with captions like ‘the candidate visiting the market’, ‘the candidate talking to old-age pensioners’, ‘the candidate driving her car’ etc.⁶⁶

Bentwich found her vocation at County Hall. On co-option to the Education Committee she joined the Elementary, Higher Education and General Purposes Sub-Committees, besides becoming vice-chairman of the Teaching Staff Sub-Committee. On her first day, she found it 'somewhat alarming' to be elected chair of the section which interviewed prospective head teachers. Again, this occasion illuminates the importance of social capital. Reassuringly, Hugh was also a member and as she entered the committee room another co-optee, Katherine Wallas, whispered 'If you are stuck as to what questions to ask, just look at me, and I'll give a lead.' Wallas, a 'delightful friend and colleague', saw her 'through many awkward situations.'⁶⁷ Dismissive of the Elementary Education Sub-Committee, whose motto seemed to be 'Education is sanitation', she found Higher Education exciting. Besides secondary and technical schools this was responsible for adult education and Bentwich became an energetic proponent of London's Evening Institutes. During the blitz, she was in the forefront of the wartime movement to provide classes in the air raid shelters, besides lectures and group discussions. 'Planning for the future' was a favourite subject, 'education' less so. Whereas forty people heard her talk on the fire brigade, only six turned up when she was advertised to speak on education. After, she attributed this to the fact 'that the workers felt they could only afford the second best – an inferior education compared with what monied people could buy.'⁶⁸

Helen Bentwich was part of the Labour leadership that adopted proposals for a non-selective system of secondary education for London. Indeed she was on the special committee that recommended the ending of selection in 1935 and proposed the immediate establishment of multilateral schools. At that time officials advised the Council that this was impossible without a change in the law so the plans were shelved. However the debate continued with pressure applied from the National Association of Labour Teachers. Hence when the 1944 Education Act introduced free secondary for all and each authority was asked to make a school development plan the LCC already had its preparations in hand. So, Bentwich was comfortably ensconced within the Labour establishment when she was appointed chair of the Education Committee. A strategy of setting up eight 'experimental comprehensives' based on the amalgamation of senior elementary and central schools was already in place and in 1947 the Labour Minister of

Education accepted the London school plan which was drawn up on comprehensive principles. It set a target of 103 'comprehensive school units' consisting of 67 comprehensive schools and 36 county complements, albeit with no specific recommendations on the time-scale for completion. The word 'comprehensive' meaning a school that would 'cater for all children within a particular area from the age of eleven-plus to the time when they leave school.'⁶⁹ In 1949 the minister approved a proposal to build the capital's first purpose-built comprehensive which must have been a cause for family celebration with Hugh.

Fittingly, Eveline Lowe was there to see Helen's installation as Chairman of the Council on the 17th April 1956. Norman and Hugh were there also. Seven weeks later Helen was attending Eveline's funeral service at Dulwich college chapel. On 19th June Alice Farren (Eveline's sister) and Miss Lambert, Principal of Stockwell Training College, attended the Council meeting to hear the tributes paid Mrs Lowe by the Council leader and the leader of the Opposition. Margaret Cole joined them for tea after and Helen noted 'it was all surprisingly easy and almost gay, although I had rather dreaded it.'⁷⁰ Her diary provides a fascinating record of her year in office. It reveals the hidden rules governing tactics in the political field and the exchange-value of a particular form of self. 'It's amusing how much people talk to me now, who wouldn't have bothered before, though I am the same person, & rather less interesting, actually, than when I was chairman of the Education Committee and actually doing things.'⁷¹ The reader also gets a sense of the demands of public office. On May 5th Helen spoke at the opening of a new building at Northampton Polytechnic, went on to the dedication service and then Lime Grove for a television appearance on the BBC current affairs programme, Panorama. It seems that speaking on education before Margaret Cole, as she did at the opening ceremony, made her 'more nervous than any other speech.'⁷² May 23rd began with a radio broadcast on Woman's Hour, followed by a garden party at Bedford College and two major Council meetings. A long moral equation of appearance with femininity is evident in her concern with the success or otherwise of her dress, small details of her trips to buy day and evening dresses, and events like the annual Pilgrim's dinner. One of two women guests among six hundred men, a *Daily Mail* reporter asked her what it felt like. To which she replied 'that as I usually sit between two men, there wasn't much difference

from an ordinary party.’ She really enjoyed the occasion and mused ‘It seems so natural now for me to be at these functions, talking easily to all these people, thus I know that life will seem very uninteresting when it’s all over.’⁷³

Conclusion

Ambitious local politicians, Lowe and Bentwich used to advantage the spaces in which they found themselves and made a significant contribution to London politics and the evolution of urban education. They show the power mechanisms of masculine domination can be compensated for by a very specific gendered and classed habitus. One which retains the disposition of conventional femininity combined with those of middle class elite habitus. Like a high proportion of women politicians Lowe and Bentwich had no children but used maternalist gender scripts to encourage women to use their civil rights. For example, in 1939 Lowe used the opportunity of a commemorative section of *The Star* newspaper to stress ‘the intimate way in which the Council is concerned with the family life of the people of London.’ She thought it essential that women seek election ‘for they can bring to the administration many of those qualities which make it at the same time a great and a personal service.’⁷⁴ This is not the imagery associated with the ‘shrieking sister’ gender script. Neither is the composite picture to be derived from the posthumous tributes she collected. Her car and her garden were her two greatest pleasures, she spent many happy holidays in Switzerland, but Bermondsey was part of her very self. There she made her home ‘among her people in a small house crammed with books and personal treasures, which she had been collecting for a great many years.’ Fellow councillors considered her one of the greatest Londoners of the twentieth century: ‘a remarkable woman whose wisdom and intellect were a great inspiration to all; a great friend and a great colleague.’ A local school governor said she was one of the most loved public servants he had been privileged to know: ‘Great alike in intellect, character, compassion and kindness.’⁷⁵

So, if Lowe and Bentwich were not the ‘shrieking sisters’ Cole feared, who were? Have they been hidden from history or is ‘the Shrieking Sisterhood’ a media

construction? In *Servant of the County*, published in 1956, Cole cast a somewhat jaundiced eye over local government bureaucracy, poking fun at the hierarchy of power symbolized by the wearing of ever decreasing jewels, the sheer tedium of proceedings and the unrepresentative nature of local councils with the personnel ‘weighted on the side of the leisured and the elderly’.⁷⁶ Revealingly, she also notes the sole item to attract the notice of the press following a meeting of the Further Education Committee: a recommendation that the Women’s Institutes be allowed to organise judo classes for women. For forty eight hours, journalists besieged the Chairman’s (Cole’s) telephone line, until assuaged by her assurance ‘that the exercise is not lethal, and that no woman under eighteen will be allowed to participate’.⁷⁷ Perhaps this kind of media trivia was at the root of Cole’s focus on the need to set forth an ideal for imitation in public life from the perspectives of the powerful? If intelligentsia were seen as a form of gendered habitus it could be argued that it operated as a resource for Bentwich, Cole and Lowe. The ‘shrieking sisters’ gender script generated a response of disgust from some, meaning the social and cultural resources of such women politicians were less likely to be converted to power. And yet, there is evidence of disagreement with Cole’s interpretation of events and personalities at County Hall. Her book came out when Bentwich was the Council’s civic head. Sharing a car en route to an official event, fellow Councillor Harold Shearman brought it up for discussion, it seems Bentwich thought it ‘incredibly bad – cheap, full of silly cracks, and most inaccurate.’⁷⁸

Overall, Lowe and Bentwich were party women who showed themselves well able to balance political polemic with the exigencies of Morrisonian politics at County Hall. The positions they occupied show they understood the priorities and centralized powers of the LLP Executive as party politics became more embedded into the organization of Council business. Their social practice demonstrates a particular middle class gendered habitus born out of high cultural capital and sufficient cultural capital to develop, albeit slowly, symbolic capital within the field of London politics. An obituary trivialized Bentwich as a ‘very decorative chairman’ but she was far more than that. These women were a powerful force in their local communities and by the 1950s contemporaries identified Bentwich as a member of an ‘inner cabinet’ at County Hall. She herself acknowledged the debt she and other women owed her predecessor and

friend, Eveline Lowe, who ‘had the simplicity of real greatness’.⁷⁹ While Lowe was showered with tributes, however, Bentwich retired under a bit of cloud. By then, her espousal of comprehensive schools had come full circle with the closure of Risinghill comprehensive school, located in a poverty-stricken part of Islington, when she was chair of the Schools Committee. There had been a series of clashes over the headmaster, Michael Duane’s attempt to run the school on progressive lines and Berg’s partisan account contains a revealing vignette of the mature woman politician, with all the markers of the gender script of moral, middle-class femininity. The setting is a meeting between the LCC representatives and the Risinghill parents who were very angry:

‘Why did you come here if you have already decided?’ called out someone; and Mrs Helen Bentwich answered, ‘Because we wanted to be polite. We didn’t come to hear from you. We simply came to tell you.’ She then wagged a finger at a local mother who was asking a lot of questions and admonished her with the words and ‘I’ve heard quite enough from you!’⁸⁰

The shaking finger is fixed in social space, a class cultural judgement on the Islington mother who has very little capital to convert but dared to challenge the status quo – have we found our ‘shrieking sister’ at last?

Notes

- ¹ See Martin, J. "Margaret Cole 1893-1980: 'Following the road of educational and social progress.'" In *Women and Education, 1800-1980* edited by J. Martin and J. Goodman. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004: 141-168.
- ² Vernon, B. *Margaret Cole 1893-1980: a biography*. London: Croom Helm, 1986: 76.
- ³ 'Masculinism is the ideology that justifies and naturalizes male domination. As such, it is the ideology of patriarchy. Masculinism takes it for granted that there is a fundamental difference between men and women, it assumes that heterosexuality is normal, it accepts without question the sexual division of labour, and it sanctions the political and dominant role of men in the public and private spheres.' Brittan, A. *Masculinity and Power*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989: 4.
- ⁴ Thane P. "Women in the British Labour Party and the Construction of State Welfare, 1906-1939." In *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*, edited by S. Koven and S. Michel. London: Routledge, 1993: 343-4
- ⁵ The two were Susan Lawrence in 1924 and the Duchess of Atholl between 1924 and 1929. See Pugh, M. *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain 1914-1959*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992: 203; Betts, R. "Parliamentary women: women ministers of education, 1924-1974" In *Women, Educational Policy-Making and Administration in England* edited by J. Goodman and S. Harrop. London: Routledge, 2000: 175-192.
- ⁶ Thane, "Women in the British Labour Party", 350.
- ⁷ The two women in between were Eleanor Nathan (1947-8) and Molly Bolton (1953-54).
- ⁸ Weiler, K. "Introduction". In *Feminist Engagements: reading, resisting, and revisioning male theorists in education and cultural studies* edited by K. Weiler, London: Routledge, 2001: 1.
- ⁹ Martin, J. *Women and the Politics of Schooling in Victorian and Edwardian England*. Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1999.
- ¹⁰ Hobsbawm, E. J. (ed.) *Labour's Turning Point, 1880-1900: Extracts from Contemporary Sources*. London: Hassocks, 1974: 13.
- ¹¹ Clapson, M. "Localism, the London Labour Party and the LCC between the Wars." In *Politics and the People of London. The London County Council 1889-1965* edited by A. Saint, London: The Hambledon Press, 1989: 128-9.
- ¹² Young, K. "Political Party Organisation". In *The New Government of London the first Five Years* edited by G. Rhodes, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972: 30.
- ¹³ Helen Bentwich Papers, 'Late Autobiography 1931 onwards', Women's Library, London Metropolitan University with grateful acknowledgement to Theresa Docherty for her assistance.
- ¹⁴ Clifton, G. "Members and Officers of the LCC, 1889-1965". In Saint, *Politics and the People of London*, 9. This is particularly noteworthy since the Redcliffe-Maud Committee on Local Government in England and Wales reported in 1969 that 12 per cent of council members were women.
- ¹⁵ Op cit, 32.
- ¹⁶ Economic capital refers to income, wealth, financial inheritances and monetary assets. Cultural capital, defined as high culture, can exist in three forms: embodied cultural capital, objectified cultural capital and institutional cultural capital. The last is the product of investment in formal education. Social capital is the product of sociability, which speaks of investment in culturally, economically, or politically useful networks and connections. See, for instance, Bourdieu, P. *Practical Reason*. Cambridge, Polity, 2001.
- ¹⁷ Skeggs, B. *Formations of Class and Gender*. London: Sage, 2002, 8; Skeggs, B. *Class, Self, Culture* London: Routledge, 2004: 15-19.
- ¹⁸ Reay, D. " 'It's all becoming a habitus': beyond the habitual use of habitus in educational research." *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 25, (2004), 431-444.
- ¹⁹ Cited in Reay, " 'It's all becoming a habitus' ", 435.
- ²⁰ Simms, T.H. *Homerton College 1695-1978*. Cambridge: The Trustees of Homerton College, 1979.
- ²¹ Woodward, K. *Jipping Street*. London: Virago, 1983: 109.
- ²² Dyhouse, C. *No Distinction of Sex? Women in British Universities 1870-1939*. London: UCL Press, 1995: 223.
- ²³ Brockway, F. *Bermondsey Story: the life of Alfred Salter*. London: Stephen Humphrey, 1995: 33.
- ²⁴ Bentwich, H. *If I Forget Thee: some chapters of autobiography*. London: Paul Elek Books, 1973: 1.
- ²⁵ Bermant, C. *The Cousinhood*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1971; Maddox, B. *Rosalind Franklin*. London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003.
- ²⁶ Bentwich, *If I Forget Thee*, 2.
- ²⁷ Op cit, 4.
- ²⁸ Herbert Samuel (1870-1963) rose to become Postmaster General (1910), Home Secretary (1916) and later, the first High Commissioner of Palestine (1920). For more information on Samuel see Wasserstein, B. *Herbert Samuel: A Political Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- ²⁹ Bentwich, *If I Forget Thee*, 3.
- ³⁰ Maddox, *Rosalind Franklin*, 28.
- ³¹ Hugh Franklin Papers, Women's Library, London Metropolitan University.
- ³² Bentwich, *If I Forget Thee*, 41.
- ³³ Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin 29 August 1916, Helen Bentwich Papers.
- ³⁴ After his release from prison Hugh fled to Europe where he remained until the outbreak of war and the amnesty on women's suffrage offences in August 1914.

- ³⁵ Rubinstein, H. 'Bentwich [nee Franklin], Helen Caroline' (1892-1972), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: University Press, 2004.
- ³⁶ 'Late Autobiography 1931 onwards, Chapter 2', Helen Bentwich Papers.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ Ibid.
- ³⁹ Blaxter, L. and Hughes, C. 'Revisiting Feminist Appropriations of Bourdieu: the case of social capital', unpublished conference paper prepared for the Fourth International Conference of Gender and Education, University of Sheffield, April 2003.
- ⁴⁰ The *Bermondsey Labour Magazine*, the organ of Bermondsey ILP, was launched by Alfred Salter in April 1920 and ran until September 1940; it was revived in November 1946, but ceased publication in August 1951.
- ⁴¹ *Bermondsey Labour Magazine*, January 1926, 4.
- ⁴² *Bermondsey Labour Magazine*, February 1926, 8.
- ⁴³ See Simon, B. *The Politics of Educational Reform 1920-1940*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1974, 65-108.
- ⁴⁴ *Bermondsey Labour Magazine*, December 1930, 9.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ London County Council Education Committee, *Minutes*, 30 January 1935, Report of the General Purposes Sub-Committee, 1-31.
- ⁴⁷ Barker, R. *Education and Politics 1900-1951: A Study of the Labour Party*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, 67.
- ⁴⁸ Richardson, M. "Education and Politics: The London Labour Party and Schooling between the Wars." In Saint, *Politics and the People of London*, 147-165; Maclure, S. *A History of Education in London 1870-1990*. London: Allen Lane, 1990, 127-139; Simon, B. *The Politics of Educational Reform 1920-1940*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1974, 192-5.
- ⁴⁹ Maclure, S. *A History of Education in London 1870-1990*. London: Allen Lane, 1990: 130.
- ⁵⁰ 'Late Autobiography 1931 onwards, Chapter 2', Helen Bentwich Papers.
- ⁵¹ *Bermondsey Labour Magazine*, March 1936, 8-9.
- ⁵² E. Lowe to E. Ritter n.d., Helen Bentwich Papers.
- ⁵³ "'Our" Mrs Lowe Chairman of the London County Council', *Bermondsey Labour Magazine*, April 1939, 9.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵⁵ Op cit, 10.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid.
- ⁵⁷ 'Proud to be woman "dictator"', *Daily Sketch*, 21 December 1938; 'When "Madam" Is "Sir"', *Daily Sketch*, 15 March 1939; 'L.C.C. will "Sir" First Woman Chairman', *News Chronicle*, 15 March 1939.
- ⁵⁸ "Mrs Helen Bentwich, Prospective Labour Candidate for Dulwich", *The Vote*, 5 August 1932, Press Cuttings, Helen Bentwich Papers.
- ⁵⁹ *Harrow Observer*, 23 August 1935, Press Cuttings, Helen Bentwich Papers.
- ⁶⁰ "Editorial", *The Streatam News*, 14 February 1936, Press Cuttings, Helen Bentwich Papers.
- ⁶¹ Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, 8th January 1925, Helen Bentwich Papers.
- ⁶² "Women in Politics: Mrs Helen Bentwich on Feminism", *Palestine Post*, 22 December 1932, Press Cuttings, Helen Bentwich Papers.
- ⁶³ "Late Autobiography 1931 onwards, Chapter 1", Helen Bentwich Papers.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid.
- ⁶⁵ "Women in Politics: Mrs Helen Bentwich on Feminism", *Palestine Post*, 22 December 1932, Press Cuttings, Helen Bentwich Papers.
- ⁶⁶ "Late Autobiography 1931 onwards, Chapter 1", Helen Bentwich Papers.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid.
- ⁶⁸ "Classes for shelters", *Manchester Guardian*, 4th August 1941; "Is education unpopular? It's like measles says speaker", *Tottenham and Edmonton Weekly Herald*, 29th January 1943.
- ⁶⁹ M. Cole. *What Is A Comprehensive School? The London School Plan in Practice*. London: London Labour Party, n.d.
- ⁷⁰ Helen Bentwich Papers, 'Late Autobiography 1931 onwards', 19th June.
- ⁷¹ Op cit, 12th June.
- ⁷² Op cit, 7th May.
- ⁷³ Op cit, 21st June.
- ⁷⁴ *The Star*, 21st March 1939, London County Council Jubilee Section, 8.
- ⁷⁵ Metropolitan Borough of Bermondsey, In Commemoration of the Life of Mrs Eveline Mary Lowe, 24th July 1956.
- ⁷⁶ Cole, M. *Servant of the County*. London: Dennis Dobson, 1956: 24, 14, 183.
- ⁷⁷ Cole, *Servant of the County*, 18.
- ⁷⁸ Notebook 1, 1956 Volume 1, 27th June, Helen Bentwich Papers.
- ⁷⁹ *Women's Bulletin*, 8th June 1956, "1st woman chairman of the LCC, 1939".
- ⁸⁰ Berg, L. *Risinghill: death of a comprehensive school*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969: 195.