

his experiences for publication in the British socialist press. These foreign travels enabled him to establish contact with socialists in other countries with whom he could discuss politics and share strategies, and it also allowed for him to amplify an internationalist, anti-racist political approach that was not universally held by other leading members of his own party. Departing from Liverpool in 1907, Hardie told the assembled farewell party 'that wherever he went he would refuse to recognise distinctions of colour of skin or of race or creed. He would see in all peoples his fellow-men only.'<sup>24</sup> In his letters from India, he denounced British imperialism and established fraternal contacts with the Congress movement for independence, causing uproar in the British establishment.<sup>25</sup> He published these letters shortly afterwards, in 1909, as a volume entitled *India: Impressions and Suggestions* in which he explained that though there were 'drawbacks' to basing the work on letters, he felt it justified as '[i]mpressions recorded while they are warm are more virile than when laboriously compiled out of stale memories.'<sup>26</sup> It seems likely that Sylvia perceived her own journey abroad in similar terms, as she too sought to establish international connections and use the opportunity to bring wider questions of inequality, particularly regarding workers' exploitation and racist oppression, to bear upon her organisation's narrowing political focus on suffrage. Like Hardie, Sylvia published her impressions in her organisation's press – her article 'Some American Impressions' appeared in the WSPU newspaper *Votes for Women* in April 1911 – and she planned to use her letters as the basis for a book.<sup>27</sup>

Hardie was evidently supportive of the idea that Sylvia adapt her letters for publication. In May 1915, conscious that he was dying, Hardie wrote to Sylvia about the objects he would like her to have, prominent among which were her American letters:

I have a great many letters of yours, especially those from America, & a good many others. They are well worth preserving and I should like to return these to you. I could let you have the whole of those now at Nevill's Court; [Hardie's London home] & you could use your discretion as to which are worthy of being kept & published, and which should be destroyed.<sup>28</sup>

Much of the material in Chapters 2, 5 and 6 can be seen to draw on surviving letters to Hardie. The February 1913 date on the typescript indicates it was written before Hardie's death, which implies that Sylvia

made copies of, or detailed notes from, her letters before she sent them. It may be that considerably more of the book was derived from letters to Hardie that were destroyed or have been lost.

### *Emmeline Pethick Lawrence*

Strictly speaking, there were two friends in England to whom letters from Sylvia formed the basis for her American book – something that has not previously been acknowledged.<sup>29</sup> In March 1911, the *Woman's Journal*, the organ of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, published Sylvia's letter to Emmeline Pethick Lawrence, the WSPU's treasurer and, with her husband Frederick, co-editor of the WSPU newspaper *Votes for Women*. In this letter Sylvia described her address to both houses of Iowa's state government in February. It was a historically important engagement; the only other woman to have been afforded this opportunity was the famous American suffragist leader Susan B. Anthony, who had spoken in favour of a married women's property Bill. When Sylvia spoke there in favour of a women's suffrage Bill, she thereby appeared as one of the leaders of the new generation of the women's movement. Her letter to Emmeline Pethick Lawrence therefore underscored the role of militant suffragettes in furthering the cause internationally: 'I thought of you all in England and held my head high as they all turned to stare at the English suffragette.'<sup>30</sup> This letter was largely incorporated into Chapter 7. Sylvia's decision to write the letter to Emmeline Pethick Lawrence, and not for example to her mother or sister, could be justified on the grounds that Pethick Lawrence's editorial role made her a suitable person to send her 'impressions' for publication. In hindsight, however, the decision appears revealing. By the time Sylvia was typing the manuscript in February 1913, Emmeline and Frederick Pethick Lawrence had been forced out of the WSPU, having disagreed with Emmeline and Christabel's policy of further escalating militancy. In contrast to her older sister, Sylvia remained lifelong friends with Emmeline Pethick Lawrence. When Sylvia's son Richard was born in 1927, she chose Keir Pethick as his middle names in tribute to her profoundly close relationships with Keir Hardie and Emmeline Pethick Lawrence – the same two people she chose to write to from America. The choice of recipients for these American letters, then, indicated Sylvia's growing estrangement from her mother and sister's politics and the emergence of her own dissenting voice.