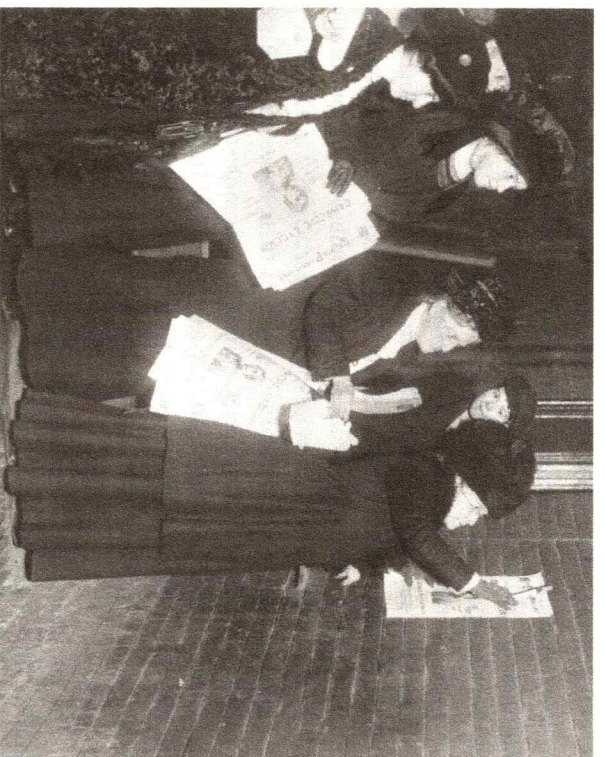


the League's inaugural meeting, Stanton Blatch expressed the dismay she had felt upon finding that the major women's suffrage organisations were talking upon such narrow lines; by contrast, with the formation of the League, 'for the first time in a Suffrage meeting in England I feel at home'.<sup>87</sup> Her comments were supported by another American, William Lloyd Garrison, named after his abolitionist father, who explicitly compared the role of the League to that of the ardent abolitionists in the struggle against slavery:

Time and time again they [the ardent abolitionists] were implored not to imperil partial Legislation or drive away from the cause friends who were shocked by the naked truth, but their only response was 'immediate and unconditional emancipation.' They knew full well that the moral force of their uncompromising advocacy would mould legislation more powerfully than temporising and wire-pulling to accomplish partial Acts.<sup>88</sup>

The League identified itself as the progressive vanguard of the movement, striving towards general emancipation instead of accepting compromises.<sup>89</sup> The Americans, as Sylvia later observed, were credited with providing a corrective absolutist zeal, with one League member declaring 'I think we could not do better than send Mrs Stanton Blatch round the country to rouse the people in every town in England from their lethargy and sloth on these great social questions'.<sup>90</sup> After moving back to America in 1902, Stanton Blatch now regarded the women's movement there as conservative and making little appeal to the growing constituency of working women. She therefore resolved to revitalise the American suffrage movement through promoting the example of the British militant WSPU, led by her friend from the League days, Emmeline Pankhurst.<sup>91</sup>

Sylvia's invitation came at a crucial moment for Stanton Blatch, coinciding with the transformation of her organisation, the Equality League of Self-Supporting Women, into the Women's Political Union (WPU). Focused upon suffrage and modelled on the WSPU, it even adopted their colours – purple, white and green – instead of the yellow associated with American suffragism.<sup>92</sup> A few weeks before Sylvia's rally in the Lyceum, WPU members had taken to the streets with buckets of paste and posters advertising the event; they proceeded to flypost all across Manhattan attracting press attention and signalling their more



4. Harriot Stanton Blatch (on the right) and other Women's Political Union members flyposting on the streets of New York to advertise Sylvia Pankhurst's first American lecture in the Carnegie Lyceum. (Paul Thompson; courtesy of Getty Images)

extrovert brand of suffragism. The WPU became a driving force in organising street meetings and public demonstrations modelled on the WSPU's spectacular pageants in London. They moved their headquarters to the basement of 46 East 29<sup>th</sup> Street, a move that Stanton Blatch saw as symbolic of their new approach: 'We had come down to the street level to advertise suffrage'.<sup>93</sup> It was here that Sylvia was taken first upon her arrival in New York in 1911 by WPU members Beatrice Brown, who had bought the paste for flyposting, Lavinia Dock, a nurse serving deprived communities through the Settlement on Manhattan's Henry Street, and Eunice Dana Brannan, the daughter of newspaper editor Charles Dana, who had been a confidante of Abraham Lincoln and had himself fostered radical transatlantic links by publishing articles by Karl Marx in the 1850s. In 1936, Sylvia wrote a piece in tribute to Stanton Blatch on her eightieth birthday, in which she recalled her own nervousness at the Lyceum meeting – 'very much overwhelmed with the great responsibility layed [*sic*] upon me to interpret our militant Suffragette Movement to the American public' – and her relief at finding a sympathetic audience: