

pinched, thrown to the ground, and had their faces rubbed against railings by the police, who also encouraged thugs in the crowd to join in the mistreatment of the women.<sup>112</sup> Sylvia, who was under orders not to get arrested in order to finish her book, *The Suffragette*, watched from a taxi alongside Annie Kenney. When they did join the demonstration they too were subject to abuse:

Finding it unbearable thus to watch other women knocked about, with a violence more than common on such occasions, we jumped out of the taxi, but soon returned to it, for policemen in uniform and plain clothes struck us in the chest, seized us by the arms and flung us to the ground.<sup>113</sup>

The WSPU responded with a renewed campaign of window smashing which saw more women arrested. Included amongst them was Mary Clarke, Emmeline Pankhurst's sister and the aunt to whom Sylvia had been very close since childhood, both sharing a talent for art. Mary Clarke was imprisoned for a month and released in late December. Sylvia did not spend Christmas Day with her family that year as she was busy writing *The Suffragette* in her West London flat. On Boxing Day, her mother came to tell Sylvia that Mary Clarke had died of a brain haemorrhage the day before. Two days after hearing this news, Sylvia boarded the *St. Paul* at Southampton and sailed for America.

Sylvia's defence of militancy emphasised both women's self-sacrifice for the cause and the effectiveness of their methods. 'They told us we'd put back the cause 20 years by our methods, but instead we're going to have the vote this year', she told a Detroit audience in March 1911.<sup>114</sup> However, when the WSPU launched its mass window-smashing campaign on 1 March 1912, Sylvia found these events affected attitudes towards her in America. The victory suddenly looked as far away as ever and the scale of the destruction to property caused some to regard the women as aggressors and others to distance themselves from militancy. The Mount Morris Church in Harlem cancelled the booking for Sylvia's lecture that had been planned there for 1 April, explaining:

We are in favour of woman's suffrage as such and we want to hear Miss Pankhurst, but after the English outbreak she indorsed [*sic*] the methods of the militant suffragettes. Just at present we have no desire to indorse militant methods. So the trustees of the church and myself

decided that, in view of all the circumstances, it would be better that she speak on neutral ground.<sup>115</sup>

In response to the British state's seizure of WSPU funds at this time, Sylvia appealed for solidarity donations from Sarah Platt Decker, the suffragist whose guest she had been when she addressed the Colorado state government in 1911. In place of that formerly friendly welcome, Sylvia's telegram was simply forwarded to the Colorado Equal Suffrage Association, who replied: 'Whereas, Colorado numbers less than 300,000 women and our finances are limited, and we have the United States to assist, and whereas we do not approve of the methods of the English Suffragettes, the Colorado Equal Suffrage Association must decline any financial assistance.'<sup>116</sup>

Sylvia's response to the mass window smashing was to focus on the plight of the prisoners, especially her mother, who faced long sentences as a result of an intransigent government. She was not altogether unsuccessful in this endeavour. Two days after the event, she persuaded a meeting in Detroit, Michigan to cable a message of support to the WSPU and another message to Prime Minister Asquith which read 'Detroit mass meeting asks for the enfranchisement for brave British women.'<sup>117</sup> Sylvia would later recall desperately trying to obtain information about what had happened in London, but at the time the press interest in her immediate response caused her to bluff, claiming that 'she had been expecting for several days to hear that such a movement had been started.'<sup>118</sup> It was important to look as though the suffragettes were in control of events and she loyally proclaimed in public that 'today is the beginning of the end.'<sup>119</sup> Privately, however, Sylvia was uneasy about the direction of suffragette militancy. The kind of militancy she would champion on return was one she had begun to advocate for in America.

#### *Applying militancy*

Sylvia's historical and political contextualisation of militancy allowed her to tread carefully between appealing for North American support without overtly calling for the same tactics in her host countries. However, as her tours began to include involvement in specific campaigns, she found her advice and direction sought.

The best evidence of Sylvia's intervention in the American suffrage movement comes from Fargo in North Dakota, where she was invited to