

who does not possess one-hundredth part of Mr Webb's technical knowledge and executive ability.

At the same time, even if some such expert as Mr Sidney Webb were to be placed at the head of the Local Government Board, I should consider it infinitely more satisfactory that he should preside as Chairman of a committee – a Local Government Board of Members of Parliament – than that he should be given, as at present, practically absolute autocratic power over his department. Though there is little danger that he would become, as Mr Burns has done, a mere tool of the permanent officials, I for one, should want to have Mr Webb's theories checked by the experience of men and women of the class that, when faced with want and misfortune, has been rebuffed and flouted by the Local Government Board these many years.*

It is true, no doubt, that if a thoroughly able and honest administration can be guaranteed in every case, great speed, regularity, and business economy of working, can be secured by concentrating executive power in the hands of a small group of experts. But unless the majority of the ordinary busy people take a very lively interest in the government of their city, unless every department of that government is brought

Police Commissioner, was dubbed 'Bloody Sunday' as it was attacked by mounted police resulting in hundreds of arrests, multiple injuries and two deaths. Burns was again put on trial and this time jailed; Sylvia's father Dr Richard Pankhurst was among those on the platform of the meeting held to celebrate Burns's release from imprisonment six weeks later: *The Link*, 25 February 1888. In 1889, Burns played a leading role in the Great Dock Strike in London, often regarded as the birth of 'New Unionism'. While many of those involved in these struggles became involved in the early Labour Party, Burns became the Liberal MP for Battersea and was appointed to the Cabinet after the Liberals won the 1906 general election. In their high-profile trial in 1908, Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst sought to undermine the prosecution by equating the suffragettes' actions with those of John Burns, the Cabinet Minister: 'he incited people to violence, and you know, of course, that he is in the Government to-day, and from being a law-breaker he is now a law-maker? Does it occur to you that we may follow the same course?': Christabel Pankhurst, quoted in Emmeline Pankhurst, *The Trial of the Suffragette Leaders* (London: The Woman's Press, 1908), p. 32. Sylvia later explained that Burns was a particular target of the suffragettes because '[a]s the assumed special representative of Labour and democracy in the Government, he was selected for attack by way of exposing the hollowness of the Government's professions, since it would not practise them towards women': Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, p. 220.

* The Local Government Board was responsible for administering poor relief.

before them, they cannot gain the experience that will fit them either to choose their administrators or to act as a check upon those whom they have chosen. Moreover the very basis of representative government is surely the principle that only the interplay of minds and wills, variously reflecting the interests of every section of the community, can secure justice and fair dealing for all. With the more perfect application of the representative idea, and the consequent development of the view that all forms of labour must receive due representation, one may look forward to the time when the garbage collectors, the scrub women,* and the other city employees, will be powerfully represented by those who will be able to speak for them with direct knowledge of their lives and work, when plans for the reconstruction of the departments employing them are underway. Who can doubt that, apart from its value to the workers to whom the community is indebted, a system which would give them a share of the decisive power when matters affecting their work were under consideration, must lead to many a useful practical result.

I understood, that in their reorganisation schemes, the tendency of the Milwaukee Bureau of Economy and Efficiency was to accentuate the custom of placing the chief executive power in the hands of the Mayor, and to provide that this power should pass direct through him, and not through the Council itself, to the heads of departments. This leaning towards the methods of private business undertakings, rather than to the further extension of the democratic ideal, seemed to me unfortunate and probably due to the very large preponderance of business men in the Bureau. Nevertheless I am aware that the Milwaukee Bureau was acting in accordance with the prevailing ideals of Municipal Reformers throughout the United States, and that they were in close touch with all the most progressive Councils in the country.

So strongly is the desire developing that Municipal power and responsibility shall be handed over to an expert few, that many advocate what is called the commission form of government. Under the commission system each Municipal Department is placed in the hands of a single popularly elected official. It is like the Cabinet without Parliament!

But however one might criticise certain features of the work of the Bureau of Economy and Efficiency, one could not fail to admire the

* {SF} If these have not been emancipated by mechanical inventions and opportunities of more congenial employment.