5. A Socialist Administration The Milwaukee City Council

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

On 5 February 1912, after helping to establish the Votes for Women League of North Dakota in Fargo, Sylvia boarded a train for Minneapolis where she would change for another train to Madison, Wisconsin. It was late afternoon, 'the prettiest part of the day', and Sylvia, with an artist's palette in mind, watched the changing colour of the sky from 'pure and limpid blue pale grey and palest palest gold with the bright sun sinking lower and lower' to 'soft greenish blue with faint dull purple clouds closer to the horizon'. The shadows, 'far bluer than the sky', turned 'pale lilac' as the sun began to set upon a blanket of snow 'tinged with pinkish gold'. Woodland obscured the last rays as 'the bleakness of the night' descended and turned the trees 'all dead black'. It was only after the sunset, and once she had changed trains, that Sylvia was able to return to the main subject of her letter to Keir Hardie though 'not for long', she informed him, as she would arrive in Madison at 3 o'clock in the morning.[1] She ended up writing over fifty pages more about her visit to Milwaukee, where she had left three days earlier, most of which would form the basis of this chapter, with the section on laundries being used in Chapter 2.

In 1910, the socialist Social Democratic Party triumphed in the elections to Milwaukee city and county offices, with Emil Seidel becoming the first socialist mayor of a major city in America. A committed socialist herself, Sylvia was interested in how a socialist administration operated in practice and in the course of sharing her observations with Keir Hardie – 'because I think you will be interested to hear what I thought about it and why' – she elaborated upon her own conception of socialism.[2] This chapter, which further develops the insights of her letter, constitute Sylvia's most extensive writing on socialism prior to her expulsion from the WSPU.

Sylvia first met Mayor Emil Seidel at Milwaukee's City Hall on 30 January immediately after the visit to the Milwaukee laundries with Miss Perdue and Miss Miller described in Chapter 2. Sylvia complained to

Keir Hardie that she felt inhibited by the presence of these two women in her interview with Seidel to whom she wanted to articulate her views on women's suffrage and socialism without allowing for 'a sensational story for the reporter lady [Perdue]'.[3] She was evidently acutely aware of the political sensitivities around her visit to Milwaukee as a representative of and participant in the women's suffrage movement, which organised women across political parties. Moreover, although Sylvia's sympathies were with the socialists, she felt Seidel's approach to the question of women's suffrage was lukewarm whilst among his rivals, who had united to challenge the socialists at the upcoming election, was Robert La Follette, who had declared his support for women's suffrage and whose wife Belle and daughter Fola were active suffragists. Sylvia, however, felt that La Follette's participation in the alliance against the socialists ran counter to his progressive political stance, observing to Hardie: 'It appears to me that the present Socialist Council ought to be considered ideal from the La Follette point of view.'[4] By contrast, Sylvia's own criticisms of the socialist administration sought after greater co-operation with and understanding between the suffragists and the socialists.

A friendly but critical tone informs Sylvia's treatment of the Milwaukee socialist administration in this chapter. She returned to City Hall the morning after her first visit, this time, she told Hardie, 'in company with two socialist ladies' – probably a reference to Crystal Eastman, then helping to organise the Wisconsin suffrage campaign, and Elsie Cole Phillips, from the Milwaukee Child Welfare Commission, as Sylvia was recorded as their guest at noon on the same day.[5] Her experiences here form the main part of this chapter, as she describes her encounters with the various departments in City Hall and the Bureau of Efficiency and Economy established by the socialists. Sylvia was impressed by the rigour displayed by the Bureau, telling one interviewer that '[t]he charts and exhibits [at the Bureau] showed the reduction of city governing to an exact science' – a statement that nevertheless also indicates the misgivings she expresses in this chapter.[6] Throughout her study of Milwaukee's administration, from her visit to the site of the House of Correction farm to her diligent reading of the Bureau's bulletins cited extensively in this chapter, Sylvia outlines three major concerns. Firstly, she argues that the emphasis on efficiency was a 'top down' approach that failed to encompass working people as participants in the socialist project. Secondly, she observes that women's needs were often overlooked. Thirdly, she notes that necessary, long-term radical solutions were being compromised

by a short-term focus on electoral success. Sylvia would grapple with these problems herself over the coming years, leading to her championing revolutionary direct democracy, on the model of soviets, after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. Writing here, seemingly in early 1913, she articulates her view that 'the very basis of representative government' is the 'interplay of minds and wills, variously reflecting the interests of every section of the community' and therefore its 'more perfect application' would be realised in a time 'when the garbage collectors, the scrub women, and 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'. It was to be Sylvia's growing insistence that working people, and particularly working women, must be the authors of their own emancipation that would lead to her expulsion from the WSPU in January 1914 by Christabel, who argued instead that socially privileged women should campaign on behalf of working women. Sylvia's response was contained in the first issue of the East London Federation of Suffragettes' newspaper:

> It is necessary for women to fight for the Vote because, by means of the Vote, if we combine in sufficient numbers to use it for definite ends, we can win reforms for ourselves by making it plain to Governments that they must either give us the things we want, or make way for those that will. Working women – sweated women, wage slaves, overworked mother [*sic*] toiling in little homes – these, of all created beings, stand in the greatest need of this, the power to help themselves.[7]

Sylvia's conception of democracy in 1914 recalled her response to the administration of Milwaukee, wherein she proposed a democratic socialism, controlled 'from below', that would necessarily ensure radical change and empower women.

A SOCIALIST ADMINISTRATION
THE MILWAUKEE CITY COUNCIL

My first impression of the Milwaukee Socialist administrators was of their eager zest for their work and their great readiness to take the world into their confidence and to explain all that they were doing. To me, a stranger, as to anyone desirous of ameliorating social conditions, to any

seeker after administrative knowledge, they gladly extended a cordial welcome to the City Hall, and an invitation to inspect all its activities.

Mayor Seidel Emil Seidel,* the Mayor, I found to be a gentle, kindly man, small in stature, with grey hair, a pale face, lined a little wearily, but with an expression singularly hopeful and serene, and dark bright eyes – an idealist, but that rare and priceless treasure, an idealist with a head full of practical details.

One realizes in talking to him that he is one of those people who are quick to understand what is going on in the minds of others, and that he meets them with a broad tolerant sympathy. On whatever subject presents itself he takes instinctively the wise human point of view. Speaking of the reorganisation of the police force, he said that he wanted to make it the duty of the policeman to report as to whether the streets upon his beat were kept free from refuse and the garbage cans emptied in due time. 'I want the policeman to have some useful work to do beside marching round with a truncheon,' he said, raising his hand for an instant, as though shouldering the weapon, with a wry little smile and a comical air of pretended pomposity. 'Doing nothing but that is bad for any man, it tends to make him the tyrant of the street.'

He spoke with evident hope and pleasure of the work that was being accomplished by the 'Dependent Children's Home', of the farm that was to take the place of the dismal 'House of Correction',† and other plans; but he added wistfully that most of the work which the administration had wished to initiate was as yet hardly begun. Every Municipal Department had been in such a bad state when they had taken office, so much 'graft'‡ and corruption had had to be uprooted, so many muddles had had to be put straight, that a large part of the eighteen months that had passed had been spent in this way. Moreover the City Charters gave the Council but limited powers of action, and whilst injunctions were several times procured to restrain the Socialist administrators from going beyond

* Emil Seidel (1864–1947), socialist mayor of Milwaukee 1910–1912. Born in Pennsylvania the son of German immigrants, he grew up in Milwaukee and became a socialist whilst studying woodcarving in Germany. In the 1912 presidential election the Socialist Party chose Eugene V. Debs and Seidel as their candidates for the presidency and vice-presidency respectively; they won nearly a million votes.

† {SP} The equivalent of an English 'Local Prison'.

‡ 'Graft': the misuse of funds for political gain.

these powers, Bills to extend them were defeated by the Wisconsin State Legislature. Amongst other things, the Milwaukee Councillors were debarred from Municipal trading and were unable to municipalize the trams, gas, electric light, and other public utilities, which have become so fruitful a source of revenue to our English City Councils and which help to pay for costly social reforms.

Economy and Efficiency. The Mayor's first and last words to me were of warning. 'You will find that we have been able to do very little yet, the time has been so short for all that there was to overcome.' Yet he spoke with glowing enthusiasm of the future and of the great world-wide Socialist Movement, of which the Milwaukee Administrators were a part.

As Mayor Seidel had explained, the first work of the Socialist administration had been to make order out of chaos, to grapple with corruption, waste and mismanagement. They had found, though the fact seems barely credible, that hitherto there had been no systematic keeping of Municipal accounts and that consequently the City's financial business was in a state of terrible confusion. The comptroller's office was therefore entirely reorganized, a businesslike system of accounting to cover all Municipal departments was instituted, and every possible legal precaution was taken to prevent future administrations overthrowing this system and reverting to the muddled condition that had obtained before.

*The Bureau of Economy and Efficiency.** In order to place the general work of the administration upon a sound basis, the Council also set up a Bureau of Economy and Efficiency. The Director of the Bureau was John R. Commons,† who before taking up this post had been a professor at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. The staff of the Bureau was composed as follows: –

M. Cerf, Accountant.
Formerly with Ernest Reckitt & Co., Chicago.

John E. Treleven, Organisation.
Formerly with Wisconsin Tax Commission.

* Officially, the Bureau of Efficiency and Economy (as opposed to Bureau of Economy and Efficiency as Sylvia titles it throughout).

† John Rogers Commons (1862–1945), a radical economist and labour historian.

R. E. Goodell, Cost Accountant.
Formerly with Marwick, Mitchell & Co., Chicago.

Fayette H. Elwell, Accountant.
Formerly Professor of Accounting, Marquette University.

Percy H. Myers,
Accountant and Editor.

Ray Palmer.
Consulting Engineer, Chicago.

J. B. Tanner,
Certified Public Accountant, Cleveland.

S. M. Gunn, Sanitarian.
Asst. Prof. Public Health, Mass. Inst. of Technology.

J. C. Duncan, Accountant.
Asst. Prof. Accounting, University of Illinois.

George E. Frazer, Accountant.
Instructor in Accounting, The University of Wisconsin.

E. B. Norris, Engineer.
Asst. Prof. Mechanical Engineering, The University of Wisconsin.

W. R. Brown.
Sanitary Engineer, Chicago.

C. R. Sexton, Accountant.

The following were engaged as Consulting Experts to the Bureau: –

On Organization.

Major Charles Hine.
Organization Expert Harriman Lines, Chicago.

Harrington Emerson.
Consulting Efficiency Engineer, New York.

On Engineering.

F. E. Turneaure.
Dean College of Engineering, The University of Wisconsin.

Louis E. Reber.
The University of Wisconsin.
Formerly Dean College of Engineering, Pennsylvania State College.

On Accounting.

S. W. Gilman.
The University of Wisconsin.
Consulting Accountant President Taft's Inquiry into Economy and Efficiency.

Peter White.
Accounting and Finance Counsel, Chicago Bureau of Public Efficiency.

On Health and Sanitation.

H. L. Russell.
Dean College of Agriculture, The University of Wisconsin.

W. T. Sedgwick.
Head Department Public Health and Biology, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

On Finance and Taxation.

T. S. Adams.
Member of Wisconsin Tax Commission.

H. R. Sands.
Director Chicago Bureau Public Efficiency.

On Social Survey.

H. H. Jacobs.
University Settlement, Milwaukee.

It will be seen that out of a staff of thirteen persons, eight were accountants and a ninth was formerly with the Wisconsin Tax Commission, there were engineers, and one was a professor of public health. Of the eleven consulting experts, six advised on finance, taxation, accounting and organisation, two on engineering, two on health and sanitation, and one only on social survey. Ten out of the eleven experts were either University professors or business men. They were many of them men of national reputation, but only one of them was put forward as having any special knowledge of social conditions or of working lives. A number of men and women of greater social experience were, however, called in from time to time to undertake special investigations.

The functions of the Bureau of Economy and Efficiency were to study actual social conditions, in order to find out how far the City Government was able to meet social needs. It had to discover whether the City's laws were enforced, and, if not, how they might be made effective. Also whether the existing laws were sufficient and, if not, what other laws were necessary. The Bureau was also obliged to make a thorough survey of all the Municipal departments from the business standpoint, and where necessary, to reorganise them with a view to economy and efficiency on a business basis.

It will be seen, therefore, that this Bureau was a most powerful force in the Socialist Administration, for every other department of the City Government was subject to its reorganisation, provided, of course, that the Council should agree to the recommendations made.

The social side of the Bureau's work had not progressed very far as yet, though various investigations were being made. An inquiry had been held into the possibility of setting up a free Municipal legal aid bureau, as had already been done in Kansas City, Missouri, but the bill which had been drafted as a result of this had been defeated by the Wisconsin State Legislature. A number of reports by outside organisations were republished by the Bureau. One of these reports, by the 'Consumers' League' of Wisconsin, dealt with women's wages in Milwaukee.* It contained the result of an investigation by Miss Ruby Stewart into the wages and conditions of women factory and home workers, which revealed very terrible poverty and sweating, and the text of a Bill before the Wisconsin Legislature to set up wages boards similar to those of Australia. Another republished report was that of an Industrial Commission on the newsboys of Milwaukee.† This was poor throughout and exceedingly weak in its conclusions, for, whilst it urged that paper selling on the city streets by little boys between the ages of ten and fourteen should be prohibited, it stated that the prohibition need not extend to boys, even of these tender years, who were employed to deliver papers from

* *Women's Wages in Milwaukee*, Bulletin No. 4 (Milwaukee, WI: Bureau of Efficiency and Economy, June 1911).

† Alexander Fleisher, *The Newsboys of Milwaukee*, Bulletin No. 8 (Milwaukee, WI: Bureau of Efficiency and Economy, November 1911).

house to house on given routes. It then added provisions for mitigating the evil, 'in case,' as it said, 'the passage of a law prohibiting newspaper selling by children is not practicable.' The report concluded with the following grotesquely harsh and ignorant sentence: – 'It will not be long before women and young girls will use the streets as a cover for begging, and it would be advisable, looking forward to this contingency, to keep girls out of the streets entirely. Twenty-one years should be the minimum age for girls. The danger to morals in the narrower sense is much exaggerated between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one, and after arriving at maturity, girls should be able to take care of themselves and our ordinances against "street walking" would protect the community.' Protecting 'the community' in this case of course meant protecting the men. But the Socialist Council are only responsible for this paper in so far as they, very properly, republished it, because of its being the report of a State Industrial Commission on an important subject. It may therefore be dismissed with the hope that the speedy enfranchisement of women, both in America and in England, will bring in its train equality of treatment for men and women on questions of sexual morality by law, custom and popular opinion.

It was into the business reorganisation of the City Government that the principal activities of the Bureau of Economy and Efficiency had been thrown.

Finding that there existed no accessible collection of the law affecting the powers, duties, and responsibilities of the Milwaukee Council and that to determine any legal point necessitated a long and difficult search, they at once began to make an exhaustive survey of the laws and ordinances of which they compiled a digest and furnished a copy of this to every municipal department. Then they proceeded with the work of reorganisation.

The rooms in the City Hall set apart for the Bureau of Economy and Efficiency were all hung with charts showing how the various Municipal departments were organised and how they were affected by charitable societies, labour organisations and other outside influences. Detailed charts, showing the relation of every city official and employee to his department, had also been prepared, to secure general thoroughness of organisation and in order that newcomers might gain at a glance a general knowledge of their duties and position.

The various economies and improvements introduced by the Bureau included the consolidation of the police and fire telegraphic alarm

systems, by means of which a saving of 10,000 dollars (£2,000) a year had been effected and the preparation of reorganisation plans by which it was estimated that 64,000 dollars (£12,000) a year could be saved on the working of the refuse incinerator, 6,000 dollars (£1,200) a year on the inspection of house drains and plumbing and 9,648 dollars (£1,929) a year in the collection of garbage.*

I carefully read the detailed reports published by the Bureau on these and kindred matters and in each of them I found evidence of order, honesty, integrity and the desire to cut down expenses and to obtain the greatest possible return for the money of the ratepayers. I have heard it charged against the Socialist administrators of Milwaukee that their discipline was lax and that they were over generous in finding jobs for workless men, but these reports of their Bureau of Economy and Efficiency formed infinitely more pleasant reading for the commercially minded economist than for the tender hearted humanitarian and the Socialist. A report of twenty-eight pages was devoted to an exhaustive inquiry into the garbage collection system.† It explained that the Bureau had sent Inspectors out to keep a watch upon the collectors. The Inspectors reported that many of the men wasted time in talking by the way and in visiting saloons and that many of the horses provided by them were too old and feeble to draw the garbage wagons as they should. Yet, though this was a report prepared by a Socialist Bureau for a Socialist town council, there was no attempt to connect these reasons for complaint with the fact that the garbage collectors were very poorly paid.

As was stated in the report, each collector received three dollars (12/-) a day both for his own services and for those of his horse and running gear, half of this sum being considered the wages of the man and half the payment for the horse and gear. One and a half dollars a day is not a fair wage for an American workman owing to the high cost of living in the

* Sylvia evidently obtained these figures from the following Bulletins: J.E. Treleven, *Proposed Consolidation of Fire and Police Alarm Telegraph Systems*, Bulletin No. 2 (June 1911) on the plans though not inclusive of the savings figure cited; M. Cerf, Louis Reber et al., *The Refuse Incinerator*, Bulletin No. 5 (June 1911), p. 2; Fayette H. Elwell, *Plumbing and House Drain Inspection*, Bulletin No. 10 (December 1911), p. 2; Robert E. Goodell, *Reorganization of the System of Garbage Collection*, Bulletin No. 12 (January 1911), p. 24.

† Goodell, *Reorganization of the System of Garbage Collection*.

United States,* especially, as in this case, the men were only employed on five days a week during thirty weeks in the year.

The Bureau originated various precautions for insuring that a full eight hours work a day (or, as was actually the case, a night), should be got out of the garbage men, in order to reduce their numbers from 98 in summer and 95 in winter, to 76 all the year round. It was left to a supplementary report, dated three months later, to mention the fact that three dollars and a half, and not three dollars, as in the garbage department, was the price paid for a horse and man in all other city work. In suggesting that larger wagons, to be drawn by two horses, should be employed in future, it was therefore urged that, when this was done, the collectors should be paid five dollars a day.

As for the horses, of whose wretched condition the Inspectors had complained, the report merely stated that they were provided by the collectors. It did not say whether they belonged to the men, or were hired by them. If they were owned by those ill-paid men, it was not surprising that many of the horses should be old and feeble, for their owners could not afford to set them free and buy others to take their place. If, on the other hand, the men hired the horses individually from some Company, they could not so powerfully insist that the horses supplied to them should be fit for work, as could a Municipal Government employing a large number of horses. Surely every Municipality should own the horses that it needs and should make itself responsible for their care. The raising of the collectors' wages and the Municipalization of the horses used for garbage collection, seemed to me infinitely more urgent than the building of larger wagons!

But so it was in all these reports. Careful and conscientious as they were, they contained few really radical changes affecting the wages and well-being of the Council's employees and of the poorer members of the community in general. Almost every proposal was for the prevention of some leakage through carelessness or dishonesty, or for the saving of expense by lengthening the hours of labour, or by keeping the workpeople more rigidly to their tasks during the working hours, in order that it might be possible to dispense with a number of those hitherto employed. Nowhere did I find a suggestion that wages should be raised, except in the case of the garbage collectors already mentioned, and in that of the

* {SP} See Appendix B, Chapter 2.

Chief Plumbing Inspector whose salary was recommended to be raised from 1,500 to 1,800 dollars a year.*

Perhaps it had to be, but the Bureau of Economy and Efficiency certainly seemed to consider the methods and machinery before the human beings. When the official, who most kindly and thoroughly explained to me all the charts and diagrams, was showing me various sub-divisions of the police department, and the improvements in organisation effected by the Bureau, I asked what experiments had been made in regard to the more human side of the work. For instance, had they engaged police detectives to be called for whenever women were arrested or were found homeless and destitute? 'No', was the reply, 'as yet we have only been able to make purely administrative changes in the direction of placing everything on an efficient and economical basis'. He added that in the State of New York a woman had been appointed a Deputy Sheriff but she had been found to be disqualified, as such appointments could only be held by persons entitled to exercise the franchise. The same objection he said would apply to the women of Milwaukee and would bar out women police constables and detectives. I suppose that a special Act of the State Legislature would have been needed to circumvent the difficulty. I also asked whether in the construction of schools, bridges and other buildings direct labour was employed by the Milwaukee City Council, as is done by many English public bodies, but again the reply was, 'No, we have not been able to do that yet'. Indeed in most directions it was impossible for the Milwaukee Council to make any reform hastily. Even the consolidation of the police and fire alarms had necessitated the passage of a Bill through the State Legislature, and the consequent waste of much valuable time.

But in spite of its being handicapped by such checks and of the fact that it is easy to criticise, difficult to perform, its work seemed to me to show that the Bureau of Economy and Efficiency was too heavily weighted with accountants, business men and University professors, who had no practical knowledge of the hardship, toil and struggle of poorer working lives. I hoped that the Bureau's influence was not tending to divert the time and energies of the whole administration too much into purely mechanical and 'business' channels.

I felt this over-emphasising of the 'business' aspect, even in regard to what I learnt of the Bureau's reconstructive arrangements. I strongly

* Elwell, *Plumbing*, p. 14.

feel that, as far as possible, all action by the Municipal Government should be debated and voted upon in the City Council itself, or in one of its committees or sub-committees, that the Mayor should occupy the position of chairman of the Council, and that he should only act for the Council when empowered by them to do so and in accordance with the spirit of their decisions. Also that at all meetings of the Council and its committees, both Press and Public may be present to hear the debate and see the voting. It seems to me that only thus can the busy populace be kept closely informed as to the doings of their city government and induced to take a vital and constant interest in them.

In Milwaukee, as I gather is the case in many other American municipalities, the heads of the various departments (who are popularly elected) received their authority from the Mayor, the City Council acting as an advisory body, to whom reports on the work of Municipal departments were made from time to time, and who frequently did not even know of problems that had arisen, until after they had been disposed of – when of course they might criticise if they pleased. This system seems to me to concentrate too much power and responsibility in the hands of the Mayor, and to place him too much in the hands of the officials, for how can one man keep in touch with every detail of our complicated modern civic life? Moreover the system leaves the unofficial member of the Council with too little work and too little power.

This plan of relegating the City Council to the position of a mere advisory body is rather analogous to our British Parliamentary system than to that of our own local governing bodies. The heads of American Local Government Departments are, however, elected by popular vote, not appointed by the leader of the administration, like Cabinet Ministers. Moreover they are not members of the City Council, though they have very great administrative power.

It is now generally admitted that the British Cabinet system tends to make the Party machinery all-powerful and to crush out the initiative of the private Member. For this reason many of those who have had experience of the working of the larger English County and Town Councils, as well as of Parliament itself, wish to bring the Parliamentary system more into line with that of the Municipalities.

The American Local Government method of electing the heads of departments by popular vote, seems to me very much better than to allow the Prime Minister to choose his colleagues. Our Cabinet Ministers usually obtain their places by reason of their value as party

men.* Generous donations to party funds, loyalty to the party machine, or leadership of a faction which the Prime Minister wishes to draw to his standard, together with a good platform manner, are the qualifications most likely to secure Cabinet rank in this country.

Though, as is the case in America, Party feeing would still undoubtedly exercise great influence in the election of British Ministers for a long time to come, it is quite certain that candidates standing for popular election to headships of Government Departments would be obliged to show some special qualifications for the office and some technical knowledge of the work. A change in the personnel, if not always in the politics, of Cabinet Ministers would immediately result, and non-party men who were recognized experts in various fields would begin to occupy Cabinet posts. If, for instance, the Presidency of the Local Government Board were to be thrown open to popular election, I think there is no doubt that Mr Sidney Webb (or Mrs Webb, if women were eligible) would receive the votes of the majority of the people of this country.† But Mr Sidney Webb is not a party man and so we have in that office Mr John Burns,‡

* {SP} This appears to be less true of American Cabinet Ministers, though they are chosen by the President of the United States and not by popular vote, because they act merely as heads of the various departments, are not members of the legislative assembly, and have no power to dictate the legislative programme, as our Cabinet Ministers have. I am sure those of them who really desire reforms must often wish that they had the power of the popular vote behind them.

† Sidney Webb (1859–1947) and Beatrice Webb, née Potter (1858–1943), were early members of the Fabian Society and founders of the London School of Economics. From 1905 to 1909, Beatrice Webb headed the Minority Report to the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. The report, to which Sidney Webb also contributed, emphasised the structural causes of poverty and advocated increased state provision. This took place in close proximity to the London suffragettes: The National Committee to Promote the Break-Up of the Poor Law, which published the report, was based at 5–6 Clement's Inn while the WSPU was at number 4. Although rejected by the Royal Commission in favour of the more conservative Majority Report, it was widely influential and seen as one of the intellectual precursors of the welfare state. Sidney Webb would later hold Cabinet posts in the Labour governments of 1924 and 1929–31.

‡ John Burns (1858–1943) had formerly been a leading socialist. In 1886, he was tried and acquitted on charges of conspiracy and sedition for his part in a demonstration protesting against rising unemployment in the course of which windows of fashionable London clubs were smashed. On 13 November 1887, Burns joined a demonstration against government inaction over unemployment and repression in Ireland. The demonstration, which had been banned by the

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 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

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

keenly enthusiastic desire to perfect the administration which was apparent amongst the officers of every department.

Municipal Library. The Municipal Library, which the Socialist Council had established to keep its officials in touch with Municipal activities all over the world, was but one of the many evidences of this spirit.

Child Welfare Bureau. The Bureau of Child Welfare, another department established by the Socialist administration, was set up with the object of co-ordinating the management of all the children's institutions for which the Municipality was already responsible and of adding many further activities for the benefit of the city's children. The Secretaries, Mr and Mrs Wilbur Phillips,* the clerks, probation officers and others in the Children's Bureau, all seemed eager, vigorous and essentially young – certainly all were young in spirit, if some few were no longer so in years. Only Americans would confide work so momentous to youthful hands, but they have faith in youth and in what is fresh enthusiasms can accomplish. I found everyone in this department preparing to leave at the close of the busy day, and have ever since regretted that circumstances prevented my finding other opportunities of seeing their work.

Free Labour Employment Bureau. Passing to the Labour Employment Bureau, established by the Socialists in March 1911, I found the Superintendent, Mr Fred King, weighed down by the knowledge that his office gave him no power to strike at the root problems of unemployment, but only to tinker a little with the evil on the surface, by helping a few cases here and there. The record of the Bureau was depressing, as those of such institutions always are. Out of 3,850 persons who registered, work was found for 1,100, or 28 per cent, and only in the case of 497, or 12 per cent of the applicants, was the work of permanent character. Record cards were kept in the case of 915 of those for whom work was found. Of these 915, only 267 registered as labourers and 80 as farm hands, yet 815 of the applicants were obliged to accept employment as ordinary labourers and 174 as farm hands. Thus very few persons actually obtained permanent employment at their own trade.

* Socialist couple Wilbur C. Phillips (1880–1967) and Elsie Cole Phillips (1879–1961). Sylvia was the guest of Elsie Phillips and Crystal Eastman in Milwaukee on 31 January 1912.

Only four women applied for work to the Bureau, probably because there was no woman official and no separate room for women applicants.

The maintenance of the Bureau cost 340 dollars (£68). That is to say 31 cents (1/ 3 ½d) for every person who obtained work. This cost was born by the Merchants' and Manufacturers' Association, representatives from whom and from the City City [*sic*] Council, the County Board of Supervisors, the Federated Trades Council, the Chamber of Commerce and the Press Club, formed a general committee on unemployment.*

THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT

The Director of the Health Department was Dr Kraft, a dark active man, with a black beard and sparkling eyes, full of vitality and talk. Dr Kraft and his Department felt that an important part of their mission was to teach the citizens of Milwaukee the laws of healthful living. With this object, they organised a Bureau of 'Education and Publications', which was opened on June 23rd, 1911. From this Bureau they issued large numbers of leaflets on hygiene, sanitation, milk, tuberculosis and the prevention of infectious and contagious diseases, and replied to correspondents asking advice on health matters. They also organised health exhibits in shop windows in two of the principal thoroughfares and in connection with various exhibitions that were held in the town. One of these exhibits represented a clean well-managed 'store', or as we should say, shop, placed side by side with a dirty neglected shop, kept by a dishonest man. Once an hour the insanitary shop was visited by an Inspector, who rated the shopkeeper for his various misdeeds and shortcomings for the information of all who might stop to hear.

A monthly magazine, called the *Healthologist*, was also published, and sent regularly to any who made application for it.† Its circulation quickly rose to between 7,000 and 8,000. Beside endeavouring to spread general hygienic knowledge amongst the citizens, the *Healthologist* gave statistical tables of births, marriages and deaths, the growth of population and the incidence of disease. It reported the work of the Sanitary

* These figures are evidently derived from Fred A. King, *Citizens' Free Employment Bureau*, Bulletin No. 6 (September 1911), pp. 4, 8, 10, 4, 3–4.

† Sylvia was impressed with the *Healthologist*. She sent some pages from the January 1912 edition of its exposure of insanitary conditions to Keir Hardie in her letter of 5 February 1912.

Inspectors, giving descriptions and photographs of slum property and dilapidated tenement dwellings, manufacturers' chimneys whose smoke was a nuisance to the neighbourhood, and defective lavatory accommodation in schools and factories, all of which had been, or were about to be condemned. Very drastic steps were taken to secure pure air for the citizens of Milwaukee, for whilst in 1908 and 1909 there were only respectively 9 and 21 prosecutions for excessive discharge of black smoke, in 1910, the Socialists having come into power in the autumn, there were 29 prosecutions and in 1911 there were 55 prosecutions before November 1st. In response to complaints of inhabitants in regard to the terrible smells arising during the rendering of animal matter, which was extensively practised in Milwaukee, the Socialist Council, after a number of abortive attempts to secure that it should be done under proper conditions, prohibited all the rendering of animal matter, except that intended for human food, within the corporate boundaries of the city.

Lists were published in the *Healthologist* of the Milwaukee Dairies and Bakeries, with an analysis showing how the Inspector had reported upon them, in order that the citizens might know where they could buy pure and clean milk and bread. An analysis was also given of various so-called 'soothing syrups' for babies, which showed that every one contained morphine, chloroform, opium, or some other drug highly dangerous to infant life.

By its fearless exposures of the corrupt practices which everywhere form so serious a menace to the public health, the *Healthologist* made for itself many enemies, and those who were interested in maintaining the evils against which it fought, described it as 'mental garbage'.

The Socialist Health Department did not content itself with giving advice and administering punishment. Amongst other things it issued freely on the written order of any Milwaukee physician, silver nitrate, for prevention of blindness in babies, to those who could not afford to pay for it. It also administered the Pasteur treatment without charge to the poor.

The Isolation Hospital. Shortly after the Socialists took office, an agitation arose for a new isolation hospital. The city had never hitherto undertaken such an effort, the two existing hospitals having been built originally by private enterprise and handed over to the city, because their promoters lacked the money for their support. These institutions had

never been entirely satisfactory and with the growth of the town had become too small. The Council had therefore responded to the popular demand and had proceeded to build an isolation hospital, which was now nearing completion and would be one of the most well equipped in the United States.

* * *

THE PRISON FARM

Before my first visit to the City Hall, I had been taken to see the House of Correction – a prison, dingy and monotonous for men, a shade more dreary and monotonous for women. A reporter from the Socialist daily newspaper, *The Milwaukee Leader*, had met me at the door of the place as I came out and had asked my opinion of it. Some of what I said appeared in the *Milwaukee Leader* next morning,* and whilst I was at the City Hall that afternoon I was accosted by the Inspector of Prisons and a big strongly built man of the people with a German accent, – Mr Martin Mies, a member of the Milwaukee Prisons Board. Mr Mies told me, and his words were corroborated by the Inspector, that all my criticisms of the House of Correction would react against the Socialist administration and that the Socialists would be blamed for every fault that I had mentioned, though these faults had continued for more than a generation, and though many of them could never be eradicated until the building itself was pulled down. But though he opened the conversation as though he were angry with me, it soon appeared that Mr Mies – an enthusiast beneath his rather gruff exterior – was anxious to unfold to me – as anyone who would care for them – the plans that he and his friends were cherishing for the thing that was to supersede the dismal House of Correction before many months were gone. At once we agreed that Mr Mies, the Inspector and I should go together to visit the site of the future institution, and within half an hour we were starting off in a little open red motor car which belonged to the Municipality.

* Sylvia's comments appeared under the title 'Sylvia Pankhurst Thinks Prison Here Is Not as Bad as England's'. However, the text explained that she 'says that the Milwaukee prison is very bad indeed, compared with many other institutions which she has visited in this country' and that 'she shuddered perceptibly when shown the punishment cells': *Milwaukee Leader*, 31 January 1912, p. 5.

We rushed away, leaving behind the city streets and the scattered houses on the outskirts of the town, into the open country. The branches of the trees seemed quite black against the broad fields of snow. The road was terribly rough, with deep ruts and holes through which the car went jolting, but the sky was very bright and the air was fresh and keen.

Suddenly we dipped down into a hollow and stopped beside some overhanging trees. To the left of us was a little farm house. A tall man came to the farmyard gate and opened it for us, as we jumped out of the car. As we climbed the high steps leading to the front door a buxom rosy-faced woman came smiling out to us. The door opened into a little kitchen where there was a fine big fire. She took us through the kitchen into her parlour which was lined with homely* country furniture and ornaments, and where also there was a blazing fire. A bedroom opened out of the parlour, and this completed her own and her husband's home.

I went with her into the bedroom to tidy my hair, now all blown about by our speedy drive. I asked her how she liked the place and how she thought she should like the Institution. She laughed and said that the place was healthy, that, though she had never before had anything to do with an Institution, she thought she could 'get used to it', and that, so far, she had seen nothing to complain of in 'them'.

When we joined Mr Mies and the Inspector, her husband was saying: 'Why, yes, of course, they are all right.'

Then we went out to explore. In the lower part of the little farm house was a sort of granary, where there were many filled sacks and tools of all kinds. A carrot top that had sent out long pale green shoots hung against the wall. A middle-aged man came in as we stood there and took a spade from amongst a pile of them that were leaning against the wall. He was dressed in the shabby, ill-fitting brown clothes of the House of Correction. The farmer spoke a cheery word to him and the man said 'good-day' to us all as we passed out.

We crossed the farmyard and made our way, by a narrow trodden path at the edge of a little wood, to the door of a shed which the farmer opened for us. It was dusky and warm inside, with straw on the ground and a pile of some kind of tall dried grass in one corner and big sleek horses standing in their stalls. A dark skinned American Indian was rubbing down one of the horses and another man was cleaning out one of the

* {SP}'Homely' in the English sense, as it is used, here, means 'homelike'. To Americans it means ugly.

stalls. Both wore the House of Correction clothing. For a few moments we stayed to talk with them about the weather, the late snow and the possibility of another fall, crop prospects and other things connected with the farm.

Close to the stable was a little old house partly furnished. One of its rooms was used for storing beans and household cereals, and a man in whitish cotton overalls, was pouring some beans into a sieve. We were told that he had been chosen to help with the cooking and that this was considered a special privilege. There were two or three beds in each of the upstairs rooms, and altogether they could accommodate about a dozen men, who were sent down here from the House of Correction, to help with the farming as required, until the new Institution should be built, when both the existing houses would be pulled down.

'Then you do not find it necessary for someone to be always in charge of the men, to see that they work and to prevent them running away?' I asked the farmer. 'Why, no,' he answered. 'There's no trouble with them. They like being here.' 'If they were to run away,' the Inspector said, 'I should soon find them out and bring them back. I know them all.'

On a little eminence flanked by dark pine woods, was the proposed site of the Institution. The plans were not yet drawn, but Mr Mies kindly lent to me the instructions laid down for the guidance of the architects who were to send in competing designs. From these instructions I learnt that the Institution was to consist of the following buildings: –

A 12-roomed house for the Inspector and his family and a 12-roomed house for the Deputy Inspector, four rooms of which were to be set apart for other officers and approached by a separate entrance.

An administration building, consisting of a reception room, library, business office, Inspector's office, Deputy Inspector's office, guard room, measuring room, housekeeper's closet, store closet, surgery, operating theatre, drug room, special sick wards and so on, the total ground floor area not to exceed 6,000 square feet.

A hospital of two wings, one of which was to be used for tubercular patients.

A Refectory Building, to contain accommodation for the preparation and distribution of food for 600 inmates, and to include a kitchen; pantry; cold storage, with separate rooms for meat, meat cutting, milk, butter, cheese, scraps and two cold storage rooms for vegetables; a bakery, with flour room having capacity for 400 barrels, bake room and bread room; a serving room, two dining rooms, each to accommodate 100 inmates.

A chapel to accommodate 600 inmates.

An unspecified number of punishment cells were to be attached to the administration building.

There were to be 160 cells for 'hardened criminals'. These cells were to be built up in two separate cell houses of two storeys high, each cell house to contain 80 cells. One cell house was to be arranged on the interior cell block plan, the other to have the cells built against the outer walls. Each cell was to contain not less than 60 square feet. There was to be a bathroom for the alternate use of the inmates of the two cell houses.

There were also to be erected two buildings, each containing ten special cells to be used as 'living and occupation rooms' for persons in solitary confinement.

Arrangements to accommodate one hundred and sixty 'hardened criminals' and to keep twenty persons in close solitary confinement, seemed out of harmony with the farm as I had seen it. I hoped that, in practice, it would be found unnecessary to keep either in sleeping cells or close confinement 30 per cent of the 600 inmates as here suggested. Happily America more readily 'tears down' unsuitable buildings and starts afresh than we in England do.

The remaining four hundred and twenty inmates were to be housed in cottages. These were to be built in three distinct groups, two cottages to be at first erected in each group and others to be added as required.

Two of the groups were to have one cottage for sixty inmates and one for forty. The cottages for sixty inmates were to contain officers' quarters, ample housekeeper's closets, and clothes airing rooms, pantry and sewing room, inmates' coat rooms and bath rooms with showers, and barber's shop. The inmates were to sleep in dormitories, 45 square feet of floor space being allowed for each one. There was to be a dining room, a day room (2,000 square feet) and a reading room (400 square feet).

The cottages for forty inmates were to be much the same, except that in addition to the dining room, day room and reading room, there was also to be a workroom.

In the third group both the cottages were to accommodate forty inmates. One of these was to be exactly like those in the other groups, but the other was to have separate bedrooms instead of dormitories, and a shoemaker's shop and tailor's shop were to be attached to it.

Two separate workshops for varied trades were to be provided for the men whose cottages contained no workroom, and a third for the 'hardened criminals' of the cell houses. A laundry building was to be

erected, to cope with the washing, sorting and mending for the 600 male inmates and the officers; also a Power House, containing boiler rooms, engine rooms, electric power and light generators, pump rooms and so on; and a tool repair shop and blacksmith's shop.

From the foregoing arrangements it will be seen that a very varied life and training was to be opened to the men.

The women's department was to accommodate thirty-five inmates. Twenty-five of these were to be housed in one cottage, which was to contain a reception room, matron's room, assistant matron's room, sitting room and dining room for matron and assistant matron, kitchen, pantry and serving room, housekeeper's closet, clean clothes room and clothes airing room. Also twenty-five single bedrooms, each containing 80 square feet, the bedrooms to be divided into two distinct groups, a sitting and bathroom to be provided for each group. Also three hospital bedrooms and a doctor's room.

Another cottage was to house the remaining ten inmates. It was to contain a sitting room, dining room and bedroom for one woman officer, ten bedrooms and a dining room, sitting room and bathroom for the inmates, a kitchen, pantry, store closet and so on as before.

A hand laundry was to be attached to each of these cottages.

These architectural instructions seemed to indicate that the women were to be taught domestic work alone, even the washing was to be done by hand as it would be in an ordinary home. The life that was being planned for them promised to be much less varied than that designed for the men, who, beside the work of the farm, would be able to learn boot-making, blacksmithing, tailoring and a variety of other trades. The fact that whilst the men inmates would number from 400 to 600, no more than 35 women were expected would to a certain extent account for this difference. But, for the individual woman prisoner, the fact that women are the more law-abiding half of the community and are therefore sent to prison in smaller numbers, does not make it less important that complete facilities should be provided to give her a new start in life, than if she were a man!

To secure for the women prisoners a variety of training suited to many temperaments, ages, and capabilities, it would probably be necessary for various localities to share a joint prison and to elect joint boards of management.

It is not always realized with sufficient clearness that women are no more 'all alike' than are men, and that if a human being has gone astray

when engaged in one occupation, there is at least a strong probability that, either the occupation itself, or the sort of life that it entailed, has been unsuited to the character of the individual concerned. A change of work and surroundings may remove the cause of the trouble.

A striking example of this kind was the case of a toy-maker whose house I once visited in the Tyrol. This man was for many years a ne'er do well, who refused to work, drank heavily and was supported by his wife, who worked terribly hard to maintain the home and children by any odd jobs that she could get. By some chance, the man all at once discovered that he had a talent, and, which was infinitely more important, a desire to paint. He was soon hard at work painting quaint conventional ornaments on boxes, baskets and furniture, and wooden figures of people and animals cut out in silhouette. Before long he had developed a most profitable business and was employing several men and women to copy his designs. He had become a thoroughly respected member of the community – a reformed character in every way.*

From the raised site of the institution, a road between the fir trees led us down to a broad grassy opening and the sloping banks of a round pond. 'This is where the men will bathe,' said Mr Mies. 'I can see them all sitting together out here in the evening after the day's work is done. ... We must not treat them as criminals, they are just men like ourselves, who are down and out and have had nothing but hard luck. ... We want to give them a chance here to build up their health and their manhood and to start life again. ...' So he talked on in his enthusiasm.

There was a glamour about the place with its dark trees and vastness of snow covered country, the keen sweet air, and the broad sky now flooded with evening gold. Such a strong fine contrast it was to that dismal prison in the town with the bowed listless men and the women always cooped in the same dreary house of cells. I could see the men, as he could, ploughing, sowing and reaping and working at all their many trades. I

* This refers to an episode in Partenkirchen during the holiday to Austria and Germany that Emmeline Pethick Lawrence invited Sylvia and Annie Kenney to join her on in the summer of 1910. Sylvia would also recall this individual in her suffragette memoirs, once again as a means of critiquing a prison system that denied prisoners productive activity and self-respect: 'the organizer of the industry [toy and furniture painting] had been the "black sheep" of his village till he discovered his aptitude for this craft. That took my thoughts back to the drear wastefulness of our English prisons, and my impatience to have the vote struggle over and done with that we might move on to constructive work caused an unrestful undercurrent in my mind': Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, p. 335.

could see the women too, milking the cows and feeding the chickens and tending the garden patch. I could see them out in the hayfields in the sunshine and working in the little cottages with the windows opened wide. And, as well as the men, who would bathe in the pond each morning and lie around it, telling stories perhaps, after their day's work was done, I could see the women playing too. Once or twice I asked him questions about the women and the plans that were being made for them, but though he answered kindly enough, it was easy to see that all his hopes and enthusiasms were for the men. And so, as I heard him talk, I prayed that some woman with heart and brain tuned to the task might have the power to plan and strive for the women and to toil to make a new future for them also, as this man was doing for the men.

Then we went back to the little house, where the farmer's wife gave us great glasses of rich milk and huge brawn sandwiches and cake, beside the kitchen fire. Afterwards she came out on the step with smiles and kind words to watch us go. The farmer and one of the prisoners held the gate open for us and helped us to settle our rugs in the car as we set off in the dusk. Mr Mies talked on still of the farm and its possibilities, but there was a weight on my heart, for I knew that those who had conceived this work of human regeneration would not be allowed to build it. This would either be done by other people, perhaps by people whose sympathies were alien to the task, or the whole scheme might be dropped for years to come.

* * *

THE WATER

When I had scarcely reached the borders of Wisconsin, on buying a newspaper in the train, I learnt that there was a typhoid scare in Milwaukee and that a hue and cry was being raised about the water. Typhoid had been rife in many other cities that I had visited and I was frequently warned not to drink the water anywhere, unless I could learn on good authority that it was pure. But in no town save Milwaukee, had the water question appeared to arouse excitement.

Milwaukee draws its water supply from Lake Michigan, on whose banks it stands, and it drains all its sewage into the Lake. Ever since the town began this has continued, and as the population has grown, the evil effects of the practice have naturally grown with it. Generations of administrators had come and gone from the City Hall and had done

nothing to check the pollution of the Lake; but when, for the first time, the *Socialists* secured office, the Democratic, the 'Standpat' Republicans and the 'Progressive' Republican* Newspapers all found in this typhoid scare a weapon with which to flagellate the Socialist administration! In October 1911 there were 90 cases of typhoid fever, in November there were 77 new cases and including those who had not recovered since the last report, 136 cases in all; in December there were 139 cases, including 73 new cases. In these three months there were respectively two, thirteen and six deaths from typhoid.†

The following table gives the relative positions in regard to mortality from typhoid (enteric) of a number of European countries, and of Australia, New Zealand and Ontario, also the approximate typhoid death rate in Milwaukee, taking the months of October, November and December 1911 as one fourth of the year.

	Average death rate per 1,000 living in the years 1906–1910 from enteric.
Spain.	0.32
Hungary.	0.27
Austria.	0.14
Roumania.	0.20
Netherlands.	0.06
Prussia.	0.05
England and Wales.	0.07
Ireland.	0.08
Australia.	0.16
New Zealand.	0.07
Ontario.	0.31
Milwaukee. (population 383,000)	Annual death rate per 1,000 taking the months of October, November and December 1911 as one-fourth of the year. 0.21

* 'Standpat' Republicans were the more conservative faction; in context of Milwaukee, the 'Progressive' Republicans refers to the supporters of Robert LaFollette (1855–1925), who broke with the Republican Party to found the Progressive Party.

† Sylvia would have found these figures in the *Healthologist*, November 1911, p. 28; December 1911, p. 28 and January 1912, p. 28.

Counting the typhoid case rate per 100,000 of the Milwaukee population in the months of October, November and December, as though it were a quarter of that for the whole year, and comparing it with the case rates in the worst English districts, we see that Milwaukee, with great natural advantages, had at least during those three months a higher typhoid case rate than any of them,* as the following table shows:-

	Case rate.
Blaydon (Urban district) Durham.	311
Houghton le Spring (Rural District) Durham.	204
Ashton in Makerfield (Urban District) Lancashire.	237
Ashington (Urban District) Northumberland.	329
Milwaukee, (October, November and December taken as a quarter of year 1911).	357

The pollution of the city's water was undoubtedly a serious matter and as everyone was abusing Dr Kraft, I enquired of Dr Kraft about it. He told me that the water was less impure than that of many other cities, notably that of Cleveland, but he admitted, that from the hygienic point of view, to be merely less bad than others is no defence. I asked him whether it would not be possible for Milwaukee to cease turning its sewage into the Lake and, instead, to put it onto the land, where it might be converted into useful products for farming and other purposes. He replied that such a scheme would be very costly and would take perhaps ten years to accomplish. He considered that it would be more possible to sterilize the water by means of ozone, as is done in St. Petersburg. He and his colleagues had begun investigating the water question and consulting experts upon it, long before the typhoid scare had arisen. They had arranged for the public exhibition of an ozone apparatus during the summer and several articles on the properties of ozone had appeared in the *Healthologist*.

The ozone plan did not appeal to me, except as a temporary expedient for purifying the water, for it seemed to me fundamentally unwise to

* {SP} Even during the typhoid epidemic, tuberculosis was however a more serious menace to the citizens of Milwaukee, for whilst in October, November and December 1911 the cases of typhoid numbered 77, 136 and 139 respectively and the deaths 2, 13 and 6, the cases of tuberculosis during the same months numbered 1,406, 1,403 and 1,451, and the deaths 42, 15 and 31.

continue the pollution of the lake, even if afterwards the water could be rendered absolutely sterile. But as I talked to Dr Kraft, I felt that he, and probably his colleagues with him, had somewhat failed to realise the magnitude of the storm of feeling that was being raised against them and that Dr Kraft, at least, had failed to understand that some part of that feeling was not animated by mere party antagonism, but by the desire to safeguard the public health. I wished that the Socialist administration would immediately come forward with a big scheme for dealing with the sewage on the land in the most scientific manner possible, and that they would also adopt some immediate means of purifying the water supply. I was impatient at their delay. Yet I knew that they were faced with tremendous difficulties on every hand. Their critics, who were urging on the water outcry, confined themselves to vaguely charging the Health Department with inertia and to complaining that it was not giving sufficiently grave warning of the water's condition. Warnings, from any quarter, inclined to be superfluous at the time, for every newspaper was publishing long columns of warning and startling alarmist headlines. It was certain that whatever the Socialists might do to strike at the root of the water evil, critics would bitterly oppose on the score of its cost. The same sections that had clamoured for the isolation hospital were already making capital out of the money which the Socialist administration had been obliged to spend in building it. A reporter on one of the Republican newspapers said to me: 'The Socialists are not a bit better than other people, they were expected to reduce the rates and they have not done so and they only built the isolation hospital because they were forced to do it.' 'How can they reduce the rates when they are undertaking such schemes as the Isolation Hospital?' I asked.

The answer was: 'Well, they have not done so much as they might for housing. We are publishing the result of an investigation which shows how bad housing still is.'

I said: 'I suppose when they take up the housing question on an extensive scale you will attack them for raising the rates?'

'I suppose so,' was the cynical reply.

To abuse reformers for their expenditure is, naturally, a very powerful means of attack upon them. The very poor, whom their reforms were designed to help and by whom they are most needed, are prone to resent the raising of the rates to pay for reforms, because they can so ill afford to pay any rates at all. When a City Council raises the wages of its sweated

employees, the even more sweated employees of private persons must help to pay for the increase.

There was little wonder, that with but two months left of their term of office, the Milwaukee Socialist administration should wish to see the Isolation Hospital, the prison farm and other half finished schemes fairly started before undertaking another big enterprise. Yet I wish they had plunged into a bold plan for dealing with the sewage and the purification of the water and had done as much as they could to get all the contracts settled, so that they could not be withdrawn from, however the coming election might result. To have done this – to have tried to do it – would probably have lost them the election –? The event proved it had been lost without.*

Sympathetic doubters of Socialism and Socialists frequently believe, as politicians of the old schools tell them, that Socialist legislators and administrators must be feared for their quixotic recklessness and hot headed zeal. And yet how circumstances combine to wear down the active fighting faculties of the legislative and administrative pioneer! All the atmosphere and tradition of politics, all the influence of politicians, make for inaction, compromise, delay. The earnest sense of responsibility, the very strength of the desire to act worthily in the pioneer's own breast often lead to hesitation. Caution whispers 'to act boldly is to lose your seat and with it all your opportunity for good.' Meanwhile political opponents magnify mild little acts and sayings into things of revolutionary import and so cause friends and foes, who are not conversant with practical details and do not realize that this is merely politicians' make-believe, to think that doughty and even reckless fights are taking place.

Already the rival Political Parties – the Democrats, the 'Standpat' Republicans and the Progressive Republicans, the Lafollette followers, were joining their forces to oust the Milwaukee Socialists.† The previous administration had been notoriously corrupt and the Socialists had been sent in on a wave of popular indignation to drive corruption out. They had succeeded. The Progressive Republicans who professed to specialise in purity of administration, were obliged to admit, 'Oh yes, they have

* Seidel's opponents united on the 'nonpartisan' candidature of former commissioner of health, Dr Gerhard Bading, to unseat the socialist mayor in the elections of 1912.

† See note above on p. 132.

given a clean administration', and as a matter of fact the Socialists had not, so far, introduced any reform that could be held to be out of harmony with the *professions* of the Progressive Party. Yet the Progressive Party was making common cause with the old reactionaries to secure the Socialists' defeat.

The defeat, which followed surely, was numerically overwhelming, but this much had been gained, – for the first time in the history of Milwaukee's Municipal politics, the Socialist administrators had set a high standard of integrity and endeavour, and once having known a genuinely honest and efficient administration, Milwaukee will expect more of its City Council in the future than it ever did before. It will not be long before the Socialists are given another chance.*

Meanwhile the Socialists elected to govern Schenectady in New York State, were able to carry on the work which their comrades of Milwaukee had been obliged, for the time being, to lay aside. Mayor Lunn and his colleagues on the Schenectady Council early discovered a means of surmounting the obstacles to municipal trading which had proved so formidable a handicap in Milwaukee.† When, during the summer of 1912, the price of ice was forced up by a Trust, until the poor could not afford to buy it, the Municipality began selling ice to the citizens on its own account and found that it could do so, without loss, at one third of the prevailing price. The Ice Trust of course obtained an injunction to restrain the Town Council's operations, but the Mayor and Councillors then formed themselves into a co-operative society and carried on their business as before. They afterwards commenced trading in both coal and groceries and whereas private companies were selling coal at 14 dollars, (£2-16-0), a ton, the Council was able to sell it, without loss, at 5 dollars (£1-0-0).

* Sylvia's prediction proved correct. The socialists were re-elected in 1916 with Daniel Hoan (1881–1961), the former City Attorney, becoming the city's second socialist mayor, a post he held until 1940. Frank P. Zeidler (1912–2006) became Milwaukee's third socialist mayor, holding the post from 1948 to 1960.

† George R. Lunn (1873–1948), socialist mayor of Schenectady, elected in 1911. Sylvia spoke in Schenectady's Red Men's Hall on 27 March 1912 as part of the WPU's tour of upstate New York. Her comments here on events in the summer of 1912 testify to her continued interest in socialism in America.

6. A Red Indian College

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Sylvia's identity as an artist is most apparent in this chapter on Native Americans. The beginning of the chapter is drawn from another letter written to Keir Hardie from a train, this time the Union Pacific, which Sylvia took from Los Angeles in California to Lawrence in Kansas in mid-March 1911. As the train sped through New Mexico, Sylvia tried to capture the atmosphere, the colours and the figures as they sped past: 'We are going through [New] Mexico. Oh the strangest and most desolate country. What indeed possessed any body of people to settle here? The ground is all sandy a dull redish [*sic*] brown with faded shrubs some grey and dead looking.'[1]

These words, and those that followed, were then adapted for the descriptive opening of this chapter in which the flashes of colour and changes in tone suggest an artist craving her brushes. It is as an artist that Sylvia identifies with the Native Americans. Influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement in Britain, she is evidently impressed by the craftsmanship of Native American artists. The letter to Hardie informs us that at the railway station, where Sylvia admired Native American wares, she bought Hardie a gift: 'the blue stones that my Darling likes and so I found something for him.'[2] Sylvia was, however, acutely aware of the destructive effect of the commercialisation of Native American culture and writes passionately against the exploitation that she sees businessmen, and not Native Americans themselves, profiting from. She mourns the way that the forcing of Native Americans into the labour market, and their low wages, results in a cultural impoverishment, as they can only afford to purchase 'cheap machine-made things'.

Sylvia demonstrated a sophisticated and multifaceted understanding of the relationship between the ideology of the modern American nation and the racism experienced by Native Americans. In this chapter, she notes the ubiquitous state representations of Native Americans among the wild beasts forced aside by white settlers. The dispossession of the Native Americans from their land runs throughout the chapter. In her