

**The attitudes of the British and French liberal parties toward socialist parties,
trade unions and democratization during 1924-1925**

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Tässä pro gradu-tutkielmassa tarkastellaan ja vertaillaan Britanniassa ja Ranskassa käytyjä parlamenttikeskusteluista ammattiliitoista ja demokratisaatiosta liberaalipuolueiden näkökulmasta vuosina 1924-1925. Lisäksi kyseisten puolueiden näkemykset sosialismista ovat tarkastelun kohteena. Tämä ajanjakso oli liberaalien kannalta suurta murroskautta johtuen niin äänioikeuden laajenemisesta kuin ensimmäisen maailmansodan jälkeiseen aikaan totuttelusta. Erityisesti sosialistipuolueiden nousu muutti huomattavasti liberaalipuolueiden asemaa molemmissa maissa. Taustateorian tutkielmalle toimii cambridgeläinen ja manner-eurooppalainen käsitehistoria jotka painottavat käsitteiden tutkimista poliittisessa keskustelussa. Vuodet 1924-1925 olivat liberaalipuolueille käännteentekeviä koska ne joutuivat tekemään yhteistyötä sosialistisen vasemmiston kanssa pitäkseen hallituksia vallassa kuitenkin menemättä samaan hallitukseen. Näinä vuosina ammattiliittojen ja naisten äänioikeuden asema herättivät keskustelua kyseisten maiden parlamenteissa. Näistä aiheista käydyt keskustelut toimivat tutkimuksen aineistona.</p> <p>Kyseistä aineistoa on analysoitu käsitehistorian ja vertailevan historiantutkimuksen menetelmiä hyödyntämällä. Näillä metodeilla on pyritty tarkastelemaan liberaalien parlamentin jäsenten käsityksiä keskusteltavista aiheista. Lisäksi näiden puolueiden asennoitumista keskusteluissa on pyritty tarkastelemaan ja vertailemaan. Liberaalien näkemykset vaihtelivat liittyen ammattiliittojen asemaan ja niiden suhteessa sosialismiin, vaikkakin heidän asemnoitumisensa näihin noudattivat varovaisen sympaattista linjaa niin Britanniassa kuin Ranskassakin. Sen sijaan naisten äänioikeus jakoi liberaalien näkemyksiä, Britannian liberaalit suhtautuivat siihen myötämielisesti kun taas Ranskassa radikaalipuolueen edustajien näkemykset vaihtelivat myötämielisyydestä vahvaan skeptisismiin.</p>	
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1. Introduction

WWI was a major turning point in multiple ways. It caused the collapse of empires of Europe and marked great advancement of democracy. The Central Powers which had lost the war now adopted democratic constitutions instead of following autocratic constitutions of the pre-war period. These changes were not limited to the losing side of the war as even victorious powers had to adapt to new realities of the post-war era. For the two main great powers of the Entente, Britain and France, these realities meant different things. Liberal parties which had been major parties prior to the war faced this situation with different outcomes.

In Britain, universal suffrage for men and partially to women was finally adopted with the Representation of People's Act 1918. The bill was motivated by the war effort as a reward for the sacrifices made by Britons with no right of representation yet. Alongside this great reform, other significant developments happened in the years following the end of the war. In political life, perhaps the most important of these developments were the rise of the Labour Party into significance alongside the split and eventual collapse of the Liberal Party. These marked significant changes in the British party politics which have not been repeated since as the two-party system of the Conservatives and the Labour have stood firmly. This had been described as one of the most dramatic declines of a liberal party.¹

France had a rather different historical context than Britain both before and following the war. The French Third Republic had a system that could be described as an unlimited parliamentary government since the National Assembly and the Senate held sovereignty over politics. Also, the executive branch was weak compared to the legislative branch which often caused unstable governments. This is in contrast with the French Fifth Republic which has a strong presidency with "rationalized" parliamentary politics.² Unlike Britain, the Third Republic of France already had introduced universal suffrage for men before the war. As such there was no large-scale enlargement of suffrage during the post-war era. This included, however, the women suffrage which did not attain any significant reforms during the period unlike in many

¹ Beyme (1985), 44.

² Garriques & Anceau (2016), 57-58

other European countries. Also, the party system and relative strength of French parties did not also change significantly during the post-war era. Socialist left had to wait for the end of the Third Republic before they could truly become main political forces of their own.³

In both of these countries Liberal parties had to adapt to the rise of the socialist left and increasing level of democratization during the 1920s. One interesting period of the era is 1924-1925 when the first Labour government rose to power with support from the Liberals in 1924, and French Radicals formed a coalition with the socialist left during 1924-1926. Since socialist were relatively new participants in governmental business, I will be analyzing how the liberal parties adapted themselves in relation to them in parliaments. It will also be an interesting question to see how they conceived socialism itself. I will analyze these conceptions alongside their conceptions regarding the women suffrage and trade unions. Since both of these issues were a relatively recent phenomenon in both countries, they were debated in the parliaments of both countries. The issue of women suffrage is interesting since we can analyze how the liberals had adapted or were trying to adapt to a new electorate. The issue of trade unions is interesting since it also represented a new form of democratization. Also due to their closeness with the socialist left we are likely to see how the liberals saw this relationship. I will be analyzing parliamentary debates regarding these issues in this thesis and analyze what kinds of conceptions the liberals had regarding these issues. In addition, I will be comparing the two countries and try to find out how they differed and were similar in these parliamentary debates.

1.1 Methodology and theoretical framework

As a method for this study, I will be utilizing the ideas and approaches of conceptual history in analyzing the parliamentary debates. There exist two major schools of conceptual history; continental conceptual history, also known as *Begriffsgeschichte*, and Cambridge school of conceptual history. *Begriffsgeschichte* is more focused on long-term historical use of concepts alongside determining different meanings concepts adapt in new situations. For this reason, historical context determines use of

³ Richard (1979), 242-244. & Turunen (2019), 98-100.

any concept. When a historical context changes concepts gain new meanings as a result of this change. One of the most notable conceptual changes was the change in the meaning of the term "Revolution " which meant a circulation of planets before the 18th century. After that, it had become a concept indicating a radical change in government or other fields. According to Reinhart Koselleck, the main turning point in the conceptual change was during the time period of 1750-1900. During this time the most of the concepts abandoned their pre-modern meanings and changed into their modern form. For this reason, Koselleck calls this period "Sattelzeit" since it allows us to look into a decisive conceptual change and as such find contrast between modern and historical⁴.

The main aim of Koselleck and other conceptual historians is to compile dictionaries in order to study pre-modern concepts. For this reason, they had studied a large collection of texts from different genres and writers. This was done in order to understand the use of concepts at different levels of society. As an example, the concept of "state" had very different meanings across society during Sattelzeit. The study of literary classics is not encouraged in the Begriffsgeschichte due to their canonized status and often differing use of concepts⁵.

Since concepts often employ multiple meanings and differing use by people, the meaning of a concept is prone to be changed. Even after social and political factors limit concepts, it still leaves plenty of possibilities to be used differently by groups. As such competing groups try to use concepts according to their own agenda. For example, democracy can be used as a vastly differing concept depending on the user. It can either hold its' normal meaning of liberal democracy, which is dominant meaning or alternately it can be used to describe other forms of democracy (people democracy ect.). As such concepts tend to gain counter-concepts that are used for describing opposite concepts⁶.

These notions by conceptual historians can be utilized in this study when analyzing what concepts were used in the debates. Since many of the ideas present in the debates

⁴ Koselleck (1986), 30-31 & Richter (1995), 41-42, 44.

⁵ Richter (1995), 50-51.

⁶ Richter (1995), 140.

can be conceived differently, it will be interesting to see how different parties conceive them. For example, the idea of democratization can either be seen in its' modern or ancient form depending on the speaker. Also use of counter-concepts is another are worth analyzing since it could reveal thinking behind the use of concepts. Although this study focuses on the use of concepts during a short time period and as such could not chart long-term changes, limitation of historical context will be kept in mind. Since for example some of the alternative forms of democracy had not yet evolved during the 1920s, it would be fruitless to analyze the debates while keeping the modern meaning of the concept in mind.

The Cambridge School of conceptual history mainly focuses on the intentions of concepts. As a major figure of the school, Quentin Skinner had argued that in every speech act people are trying to pursue something. In order to uncover the intention of a speaker, their historical and social contexts had to be understood. Also, the use of language conventions and games in the language in question is crucial in deciphering the intention of a speaker. As such contexts play an important part in understanding possible intentions in each speech act.⁷

Uses of rhetorical means are another fundamental aspect of studying various speech acts. Irony, for example, usually causes speech to have opposite meaning than the actual wordings would imply. Also, it is important to notice that prevailing culture limits on how speech acts can be done. As such most speakers adapt to the situation and argue for agendas that they do not really support. For these reasons speakers often employ self-made motivations that follow their personal logic, uncovering these would usually help us to understand the reasoning behind speech acts.⁸ These notions of conflicting motivations can be used to analyze the parliamentary debates of the 1920s in many ways. For example, some MPs who had previously opposed women's suffrage could have adopted universal suffrage without truly changing their minds. Since universal suffrage was becoming accepted by mainstream political parties, it would not make sense for them to oppose it vocally due to electoral concerns.

⁷ Richter (1995), 131 & Skinner (2002), 142.

⁸ Skinner (2002), 155-156.

The Begriffsgeschichte and the Cambridge school differ significantly on how they approach studying concepts. Koselleck and his colleagues mainly focus on uses of concepts during long time periods. As such concepts are according to them a result of the long-term formation and cannot be reduced into individual uses. Koselleck also points out that since prevailing historical context governs the use of concepts, they cannot change quickly by individual uses of concepts. This is in contrast to Skinner and other representatives of the school who argue that it would be more fruitful to analyze individual uses of concepts since they are unique to each speech act.⁹

Additionally, the two schools differ on what is the most ideal way to study various meanings of concepts. The Begriffsgeschichte argues that concepts themselves should be the main focus of conceptual history. In contrast, Skinner argues that studying discourses and ideologies behind concepts is more interesting than studying concepts themselves. These differences manifest themselves in how the two schools conduct their research; the Begriffsgeschichte aims to compile lexicons of concepts whereas the Cambridge school seeks to understand contexts behind them. Because Skinner thinks that concepts gain their meaning mainly from motives of speakers, they are rarely contested in meaning and as such neutral. As a result, he argues that instead of studying concepts themselves, there could not exist histories of concepts but instead histories of uses of concepts.¹⁰

My goal is to approach my research by utilizing ideas of both schools of conceptual history. Even after my scope of analysis is short, only two years, I will keep a larger context in mind when deciphering concepts and speeches in the debates. As such some context for the political systems of Britain and France during the time period will be provided in chapter 2. Also, I will utilize the idea of counter-concepts to analyze how speakers valued and devalued certain concepts when engaging in the debates. For example, it would be interesting to see what was a counter-concept for democracy; pre-modern aristocracy or modern dictatorship? The focus of this thesis will be on analyzing individual speeches during the debates and as such we shall cover agendas

⁹ Richter (1995), 117,131,133-134 & Ihalainen (1999), 38-40.

¹⁰ Richter (1995), 117,131, 133-134 & Ihalainen (1999), 39-40 & Skinner (2002), 164-169.

and argumentation of them. In order to understand the reasoning of the individual speaker, I will provide some background information.

Since I will be analyzing debates of two rather different countries, approaches of comparative history will also be utilized in this thesis. Unlike in other social sciences, historians usually do not engage in comparative studies due to a multitude of factors. The most important of these reasons is focus on national historiography and perceptions that history lacks general laws. As such many historians reject comparisons since they think that most historical contexts are unique and thus incomparable.¹¹

This does not mean that comparative histories have not had been successfully written. Certain previously uncontested historical exceptionalist schools have been questioned by comparative historians during recent decades. One of these is the German Sonderweg theory which argued that Germany went through unique historical during the 19th and the 20th centuries due to its' unique institutions. Since Germany had been traditionally contrasted with western European countries which differed significantly from it, the idea of unique development appeared legitimate. More modern historical comparisons usually compare Germany and other central European countries which shared some historical similarities. These comparative studies have been contributing to the delegitimatization of Sonderweg School and have allowed expansion in comparative history.¹²

There exist many important elements when comparing historical phenomena. Firstly, a suitable unit of comparison has to exist in order to compare. Secondly, units of comparison have to be comparable in some capacity. Apples and oranges cannot be, for example, compared with the standard of apples. Instead, they can be compared with the standard of fruits. Thirdly, choosing comparative units is important since the comparison is relative to units of comparison. The aforementioned comparison of German historical development is a good case of comparison partners mattering.

¹¹ Baldwin (2004), 1-3.

¹² Baldwin (2004), 4, 14-15.

Fourthly, in history diachronic developments have to be kept in mind since they shape how singular events play out.¹³

I have considered these questions in order to compare debates in the two countries. Since both the British parliament and the French National Assembly were fundamental deliberative political bodies of their countries, they share enough similarities with each other in order to make comparisons with them. Even though both of them were deliberative bodies with actual powers, they had rather different historical identities as we are going to elaborate later. Britain and France form logical partners for comparison in that regard that they were relatively democratized western European countries during the time period. Thus their political cultures shared more elements than France and Germany for example. However, one could make an argument that comparing France with other western European countries such as Belgium would be more ideal since they shared more cultural background, for example, the Catholic Church as a dominant religion. As such my units of a comparison share enough similarities for comparison while differing in many aspects. In the case of diachronic developments, both countries progressed at a different pace in terms of democratization and as such, I have to keep in mind that they were debating on different levels of democratization.

Since parliamentary debates form the primary source for this thesis, peculiarities of the parliamentary debate have to be covered. According to Kari Palonen, the ideal of parliamentary politics is a situation in which language is used to debate in pro et contra manner. Since dissensus is a natural state of parliamentary politics, disputation is a major part of parliamentary debate. As such parliaments have developed a unique political culture in which issues are debated and amended in a specific parliamentary procedure. Due to these peculiarities of parliamentary style, MPs are influenced by it and as such have to adapt to it. For this reason, MPs speak in a peculiar way both in parliament and in the public. Since this parliamentary style of politics influences the

¹³ Haupt & Kocka (2004), 26-27.

language used in debates, this makes parliamentary debates different than other political debate.¹⁴

In addition, Palonen makes a distinction based on topics of dissensus in parliamentary debate. These are based on four concepts of political; policy, polity, politicking, and politicization. Policy means a set of agendas pursued by individuals or organizations. Polity usually refers to an idea of the political regime; these can be parliamentary or presidential for example. Politicking means using parliamentary procedures as a way of pursuing an agenda. Politicization is a way to bring previously accepted decisions back into a political debate.¹⁵ These levels of dissensus can be utilized in analyzing how the debates were focused on the terms of politics. In terms of policy, we can likely see what kind of agendas MPs had toward trade unions and how they argue for it. Polity level of debates will be seen when speakers either defend or oppose women's participation in the political life of their respective countries. Politicking will be part of the debates since they had limited time and efforts devoted to them, how such allocations were organized will form a point of contention in the debates. In regards to politicization, there will be points which are nearly unanimously by MPs but are challenged by some individual speakers nevertheless.

1.2 Historiography and previous research

The fate of the Liberal party of Britain during the 1920s has been subject of extensive historical study. Especially the quick descend of the party from a major party into irrelevance in less than ten years has caused a lot of debate. Since the amount of research about the topic is extensive, I have limited myself here in providing mainlines of the historiography of the time period.¹⁶

One of the earliest and perhaps most influential explanations for the downfall of the Liberal Party have been provided by George Dangerfield. In his popular history work "the Strange Death of Liberal England", written in 1935, he argued that the Liberal party faced four great rebellions during 1906-1914. These rebellions were the constitutional crisis over the House of Lords' status, Suffragette movement, issue of

¹⁴ Palonen (2008), 82-103 & Palonen (2012), 21, 61-62.

¹⁵ Palonen (2017), 103-108.

¹⁶ Beyme (1979), 44-45.

Irish home rule and rise of militant trade unions. These rebellions severely undermined the status of the Liberal government and effectively put an end for it being regarded as an effective governmental party. The government's failure to answer to any of these rebellions would eventually question the role of the party as being a force of progress. As such, they left the party in a limbo of being too radical for supporters of traditional order while being seen too moderate on the left. As such the party would have collapsed according to Dangerfield soon even without WWI and its' aftermath which were even more difficult years for the party.¹⁷

This hypothesis has been challenged by historians ever since. Michael Brock, for example, has rejected Dangerfield's idea that the British political system was on a brink of collapse during 1910-1914 when the Liberal government found itself in a precarious situation regarding the rebellions. For Brock, it seems that Dangerfield's views were influenced by recent events such as the fall of the Weimar Republic in 1933 to Nazis. He further points out that neither trade unions nor suffragettes had enough power to challenge the parliamentary system. In the case of the unions, he notifies that the general strike of 1926, when trade unions were much more powerful than in 1910-1914, did not seriously threaten the system. Also, suffragettes were not holding any real revolutionary potential according to him and as such presented no real threat to the government. Brock, however, admits that the Irish presented a real challenge to the government since the issue has been divisive among the Liberal party in 1886 when Liberal unionist broke out. Since the Liberals were anti-militaristic and against coercion, the Liberal government had few options regarding the Irish situation where Ireland demanded self-rule and utilized anti-constitutional means for that goal. The Home rule was eventually passed in 1914 but did not come into effect due to the WWI, frustrations for the situation caused political violence since then.¹⁸

Trevor Wilson also dismisses Dangerfield's claims that the Liberal party was already on the verge of collapse during 1910-1914. In his extensive study, Wilson has found that no evidence points toward the "strange death" of Liberals before WWI. The Labour Party did not fare well in either election of 1910 or in by-elections since. The

¹⁷ Dangerfield (1935/2012), 9-14.

¹⁸ Brock (1985), 412-416.

issue of Ireland was problematic but not something that could not have caused the collapse of the party in itself. Previous failures of Liberals to introduce a Home Rule and their recovery after that prove that according to Wilson. Instead, Wilson argues that the scissions between Lloyd George and Asquith during the Great War and management of the war were the main reasons for the downfall of the party. Especially the split of the party into two factions proved fatal since it divided resources of the party against each other and caused a long-lasting distrust between Liberals. Wilson made an allegory of the Liberal party by comparing it to a person who had been recently sick (the four rebellions of Dangerfield) but who died when omnibus (WWI) drove over him/her.¹⁹

The French historiography of the Radical Party is linked closely with the historiography of the Third French Republic. Due to the dominance of the party during the latter part of the republic, scholars often evaluate the party alongside the political system in which it flourished. This usually means that the party is often associated with the failures of the Third Republic during its later part, especially the Fall of France during WWII is seen as a result of the system's flaws. This is further reinforced by the stigmatization of the political parties of the Third Republic following WWII when new political forces emerged and replaced the Radicals. As such most of the historiography of the party is also the historiography of the Third Republic which fell with it.²⁰

In terms of comparative studies made about parliamentary debates regarding the democratization of the early 20th century there exist some research. For example, Pasi Ihalainen has studied and compared British and German parliamentary debates regarding extending political rights during WWI. In this article, he was able to uncover similarities and differences of political conceptions regarding the parliamentary form of government and democracy in the parliaments of the two countries. He also focused on transnational references in the debates, for example, British dominions were seen as vocal points of comparison regarding the extension of suffrage. In the case of comparative studies of parliamentary debates, Ihalainen points

¹⁹ Wilson (1966/2011), 18-21.

²⁰ Jackson (2006), 872-875.

out that they are few despite the fact that they allow uncovering transnational political discourses.²¹ Since comparative parliamentary studies are few between Britain and France, this thesis has a place in filling a void in comparative studies regarding British and French parliaments. Kari Palonen had compared different kinds of ideal parliaments, however. In his study he had argued that there exist three different kinds of parliaments, each focusing on different parts of political debate. First of these is deliberative parliament where momentum is in the present and debating about amendments is the main focus of parliamentary politics since they affect legislation significantly. Since these kinds of parliament tend to have a two-party system, the government had a secure majority every time since individual MPs even from governmental parties are expected to challenge legislation at every turn. An example of this kind of parliament is the British parliament. The second type of parliament is a legislative parliament which puts focus on delivering the legislation. This type of parliament is represented in the USA congress. The third type of parliament is representative parliaments where the focus of the political debate is in elections instead of everyday debate. Since elections are the focal points in this type of parliament, timely they are oriented in the past. Since governments are formed from multiple parties in this kind of parliaments, governmental programs are important in terms of the political process since they bind governmental majorities. Due to these debates are not in the main focus of this kind of parliaments. French National Assembly is an example of a representative parliament.²² This division of ideal parliaments is useful to keep in mind when analyzing debates from two different countries like Britain and France. Their differences in political debates could also be explained by these this division of ideal parliaments.

Henk te Velde has also compared parliamentary politics of Britain and France during the 19th century. In his study about parliamentary debates in these countries regarding mixed governments, he had analyzed how perceptions concerning it have evolved. Mixed governments referred to the classical idea of combining elements of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy into the form of government instead of letting one element to dominate the others. Many politicians in both countries utilized this notion of mixed

²¹ Ihalainen (2014), 423-424, 432-433.

²² Palonen (2018), 8-11, 15-16.

government in order to hold the demands of democratic reforms at bay. Overall notions of mixed government remained important throughout the 19th century whereas in France it waned off during the Third Republic.²³

French parliamentary debates are rarely brought up for comparison with other countries. That is particularly true for the Third Republic period; the main reason for this is likely poor quality of documents containing parliamentary debates. The French parliamentary debates during the Third Republic are available to the public in the form of JPEG images, this format makes word searches difficult compared to the British parliamentary debates in Hansard where they are available in a textual form. Despite this fact, it will be interesting to analyze the two countries which are not usually compared with each other in parliamentary politics. Even though this thesis will not focus solely on transnational discourses of the debates, it will be brought up since the topics debated were universal issues. This will usually lead to references to situations of other countries in the debates and as such I will analyze them.

I will be limited to analyzing debates held in lower houses of each parliament. As such debates held in the House of Lords and the Senate will not be analyzed. Reasons for omitting will be twofold; firstly nature of the two upper houses differs so significantly that it would be difficult to compare them. As such they would be barely comparable in nature. For example debates in the House of Lords did not follow bipartisan political divisions as they did in the Senate. Secondly, the scope of this thesis does not allow us to analyze such amount of debates in order to be concise.

2. Political systems of Britain and France during 1920s

Since Britain and the Third French Republic had vastly different party systems from each other, short introductions on the subject are in order to provide context for analyzing the debates of the 1920s regarding democratization. As such a brief history and role of the liberal parties and other parties will be provided in the following subchapters.

²³ Velde (2018), 43-44, 47-50.

2.1 Political parties of Britain

Britain had maintained a relatively stable two-party system throughout the 19th. After the formation of the Conservative party and the Liberal party in 1835 and 1868 respectively the two parties governed Britain in turns. There existed no real challengers for this status quo during this period. The only real challenge for domination of these parties was manifested in the form of the Irish parliamentary party which had been formed in order to introduce Home Rule for Ireland. Even though the Irish question had caused some splits, such as Liberal Unionist to join Conservatives, it did not threaten the status of the two main parties as main players in British politics during the time period.²⁴

The situation started to change at the beginning of the 20th century when the Labour party gained representation in Westminster. Before WWI the Labour remained a minor ally of the Liberals without a real possibility of forming a government themselves. This status changed after WWI when the franchise was greatly enlarged alongside the internal feuds of Liberals. The Labour became the main opposition toward Conservatives during the 1920s and as such the traditional two-party system of Conservatives and Liberals was broken. The relevance of the Liberal party quickly deteriorated to the point of not being able to become a governmental party like it used to be. This kind of situation has not seen since in Britain despite some notable successes of third parties in the following decades.²⁵

2.1.1 The Liberal Party

The Liberal Party was formed in 1868 as a result of Whigs²⁶, Peelites²⁷ and Radicals²⁸ of uniting forces. At the time of its' formation, the Liberal party was the party of middle classes and the growing worker population. The main agendas of the party were the promotion of free trade and colonial empire-building at the expense of

²⁴ Searle (2001), 27-28

²⁵ Ball (1981), 26-28,88-89.

²⁶ Whigs were a faction in the parliament who supported constitutional monarchy in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution (1688).

²⁷ Peelites were former Conservatives who split from the Conservative party during the 1840s over the issue of free trade and the Corn Laws which restricted the importation of grain.

²⁸ The Radicals movement had its' roots in Chartism which aimed to introduce universal suffrage and other drastic democratic reforms.

European affairs. In economic affairs, the party supported laissez-faire-style capitalism compared to a more statist approach of Conservatives in order to adapt to an industrialized society.²⁹

During the beginning of the 20th century, the Liberal party adapted more statist policies regarding economic and social affairs. These new developments in liberal policies were known contemporarily as “New Liberalism” as they differed significantly from previous liberal ideas which came to be known as “Classical Liberalism”. This new strand of liberalism was the ideological background of the Liberal party and its’ policies in the years preceding WW1.³⁰

Liberals returned into government after the general election of 1906 under Henry Campbell-Bannerman who served as a prime minister until 1908 when he resigned due to his poor health. He was followed by Herbert Asquith who previously served as a Chancellor of Exchequer. Under their governments, Britain adopted many reforms regarding welfare and as such marked a new direction toward the British welfare state. In order to fund these reforms Asquith’s Chancellor of Exchequer, Lloyd George, proposed new taxes on the rich. This proposal, known as People’s Budget, was unprecedented in the way that it was one of the first efforts to redistribute wealth more equally in Britain. The People’s budget met heavy resistance from Conservatives and landed aristocracy who dominated the upper house of the British parliament, the House of Lords. As such the budget was vetoed by the House of Lords in 1909.³¹

This caused a constitutional standoff between the Liberal government and the House of Lords. In order to gain a clear mandate to solve the deadlock, two general elections were held in 1910 in which Liberals lost their majority while barely remaining the largest party in the House of Commons. Asquith was able to continue as a prime minister due to support from both the Irish parliamentary party and the Labour party. As such the Liberal government was able to pass Parliament act 1911 which limited veto right of the upper house into delaying veto. In order to appease the Irish parliamentary party, the Liberal government had to introduce Home rule for Ireland.

²⁹ Searle (2001), 11-14.

³⁰ Freedon (1986), 11-13.

³¹ Searle (2001), 69-71, 74-75.

Also growing demands of the Labour made the position of the government growingly tenuous. As such the position of the Liberal government was on the crossroads when WWI started.³²

During WWI the Liberal Party formed a coalition government with the Conservatives in order to strengthen the war effort. During the war, Lloyd George ousted Asquith from the position of prime minister with support from Conservatives and became prime minister himself. This caused a split within the Liberal party between those who supported Asquith and those who supported Lloyd George. In the aftermath of the war, this split became more apparent when a new general election was held in late 1918. In this election, some of the Liberal candidates received an endorsement letter from Lloyd George and the National government. The goal of this “coupon” was to elect many candidates as possible from Lloyd George’s faction (also known as National Liberals) and Conservative Party. Due to electoral cooperation of the two, Asquithian Liberals only gained 36 seats as opposed to parties of the National government which won 509 seats out of 707. Lloyd George was able to continue as prime minister whereas Asquith lost his seat.³³

The National government lasted until 1922 when Conservatives under Bonar Law decided not to rely on Lloyd George and National Liberals any longer. In general elections of 1922, the Conservative party was able to win a majority in the Commons and as such no longer needed support from other parties. Asquithian Liberals were able to recover somewhat from the catastrophe of 1918 although their status of the largest opposition party was usurped by the Labour party. Since National Liberals no longer had *raison d’être* following the dissolution of the National government, the two Liberal parties merged in 1923.³⁴

Due to the unexpected death of Bonar Law in 1923, a new general election was held only a year after the last one. In this election, the new leader of Conservatives, Stanley Baldwin, advocated for Imperial preference in trade policies. Since free trade was one of the major issues for the Liberal party, they were able to win seats many seats from

³² Ball (1981), 73-74 & Bentley (1977), 150-152

³³ Ball (1981),76-77 & Bentley (1987), 125-127.

³⁴ Ball (1981), 60-61, 89.

Conservatives. This combined with gains of the Labour party caused Conservatives to lose their majority. Thus the election resulted in a hung parliament where no party held a majority. A new government was formed by the leader of Labour, Ramsay MacDonald, with support from the Liberal party.³⁵

Although the Labour government lasted only 10 months and was able to accomplish little, it proved that the Labour party had matured into a governmental party. Due to the anti-communist hysteria caused by Zinoviev letter³⁶ and the difficult financial situation of the Liberal party caused by annual elections in recent years, Liberals were not able to gain track in the general election of 1924. Only 40 seats were won by the Liberal party, this was the landslide defeat from which they had never recovered. In the years following the Liberal party become more marginalized and as such became largely irrelevant in the British politics in the following decades.³⁷

2.1.2 Other political parties in Britain

As mentioned before, the Conservative Party was the other major party during the time period preceding the 1920s. Being formed in 1835 by Tories³⁸, the party continued some of their agendas. As a party of high nobility, farmers and clergy of the Church of England, the Conservatives had diverse agenda and base. One of the most important was protectionism since British farmers faced increasingly fierce competition from other countries. As such the party advocated preferential trade relations with other parts of the empire. The other main agenda of the party was to conserve the status quo of the British constitution in order to preserve stability.³⁹

During the beginning of the 20th century, Conservatives were in an interesting position. On the other hand, their traditional strongholds such as the House of Lords had lost their traditional power and as such their position seemed endangered. But on the other hand, troublesome years during and following the WWI gave the

³⁵ Pugh (2002), 186-187.

³⁶ Zinoviev letter was a forged letter that contained orders from Comintern to the British Communist party to radicalize workers in order to prepare for revolution.

³⁷ Pugh (2002), 191-194.

³⁸ Tories were a faction in the British parliament which formed during the late 17th century as a response to the Glorious Revolution. They supported privileges of monarchy and status of the Church of England. Their main opposition were previously mentioned Whigs.

³⁹ Greenleaf (1983), 196—198, 201-202.

Conservative party certain prestige. As a party of the government which led Britain victorious in the war, the Conservatives could claim that spoils of war were acquired thanks to their efforts. The party also adapted into universal suffrage well in the post-war era by acquiring new voters in new demographics. For example, middle classes which have been the traditional base of the Liberal party started to support Conservatives due to shifts in both parties. As such the Conservatives remained as the most successful of the British parties during the interwar period, only being in opposition during 1924 and 1929-1931 when the Labour party was able to form governments with Liberal support.⁴⁰

The Labour party was formed in 1900 in order to gain representation for workers and trade unions. Reformist socialist thought also influenced the party from the beginnings, revolutionary Marxism never gained a significant hold in the party. The party was able to win some seats (42 seats of 670 in 1910 elections) with some electoral support from the Liberal party before WWI. The lack of universal suffrage meant that the Labour could not contest elections on its own since most of its base did not have franchise and thus challenge the other major parties, however. The introduction of universal suffrage in 1918 changed this situation.

Due to the influx of a large number of voters following the Representation of People's Act 1918, the Labour party was finally able to capitalize its core base in general elections. In the first elections after WWI, it seemed that the Labour would remain on the sidelines of British politics as the two Liberal parties outnumbered it in the terms of seats and votes. The continuing split of the Liberals caused a rapid decline in their fortunes and as such the Labour party was able to represent itself as the main opposition party against the National government. As such the party was able to attain the status of the official opposition in 1922 elections. In the next year's general election the party was able to become a governmental party with support from the Liberal party. Following the short-lived Labour government of 1924, the party became the other main party in British politics, eclipsing the Liberal party.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Greenleaf (1983), 421-422.

⁴¹ Pugh (2002), 194-197 & Thorpe (2001) 40-41, 48-51.

2.2 Political parties of the French Third Republic

Unlike Britain which had one of the most politically stable political regimes in the 19th and 20th centuries, France faced multiple regime changes from both monarchies to republics and the other way around⁴² during the same time period. For this reason, modern political parties were formed relatively late in France compared to other European countries. The most important political conflict during the beginning of the Third Republic was a question over the form of government; monarchists of three different variations⁴³ aspired at the restoration of monarchy and republicans strived to safeguard newly founded republic. Republicans eventually won this conflict and as a result, the Third Republic became a highly parliamentary system with little power given to the executive in fear of potential restoration of the monarchy.⁴⁴

Foundations of French parties came partly from this conflict due to disagreements between republicans over institutions of the Republic; more conservative republicans wanted to establish two-chamber parliament and make successive reforms in consolidating the Republic, more radical republicans demanded a unicameral legislature and hard stance toward traditional institutions which were regarded as reactionary such as the Catholic church and the army. These two groups came to be known as the Opportunist Republicans and the Radicals in the parliament in which they mainly functioned, only after the Dreyfus Affair,⁴⁵ which forced the republicans

⁴² There was total of seven different political regimes in France during 19th century, the First Republic, the First Empire, the Bourbon monarchy, the July monarchy, the Second Republic, the Second Empire and the Third Republic.

⁴³ These were the Legitimists, who supported the house of Bourbon, Orléanists, who supported descendants of Louis Phillipe and Bonapartists who supported the house of Bonaparte. Legitimists organized themselves into reactionary *L'Action française*, most of the Orléanists were integrated into moderate republicans and the Bonapartists largely disappeared from the political spectrum. René Rémond had however argued that both Boulangism and Gaullism are manifestations of Bonapartism in their effort to establish strong central government led by a great man. Rémond (1954).

⁴⁴ Richard (1979), 234–240.

⁴⁵ The Dreyfus Affair was a spying scandal in the French army during 1894–1906. Cause of the affair was wrong sentence of Jewish artillery captain Alfred Dreyfus, who was exiled to French Guyana. Later it was revealed that the one who leaked information to Germans was Major Esterhazy who was protected by the army against accusations. The scandal divided French into two camps; to defenders of Dreyfus which consisted secular republicans and socialists who saw the scandal as evidence that the army and the church were reactionary forces aiming at restoration of the old order, and to conservatives and nationalists who advocated close relationship between the Catholic Church and the state and disciplined army. The affair eventually resulted to the rise of the rise of the Radical Party led by Georges Clemenceau, active defender of Dreyfus, and rehabilitation of Dreyfus.

to take a stance toward nature of the regime, did these parliamentary groupings organize themselves as national political parties.⁴⁶

2.2.1 The Radical Party

The first modern political party in the Third Republic was the Radical Socialist⁴⁷ party which was founded in 1901 in the immediate consequence of the Dreyfus affair. The party was a middle-class party with especially strong support from liberal professions such as journalists, teachers and lawyers. It was also supported significantly by entrepreneurs, middle classes, and anticlerical peasants of the Midi and the Southern France where there have been significant religious divergences from the rest of the country since the Cathars. The Masonic lodges also played an important organizational function in the party's organization in the beginning due to a close relationship between the Radicals and the freemasonry in their secularization agenda. Ideologically the party had its roots in the radical-liberal tradition which emphasized universal political rights and republican principles⁴⁸. Policies pursued by the Radicals were strongly influenced by anticlericalism due to the hostile attitude of the Catholic Church and the Pope toward the Republican form of government. The influence of the Church in education and in ownership of monasteries and lands was also perceived by the Radicals as a hindrance to social progress. On economic issues, the party advocated limited social programs and a tax on income. Due to the party's status as a party of the middle classes and its' economic interests, the Radicals were driven to its reformist agenda by a defense of the social order rather than any vision to radically change French society. For this reason, it was described that the party's heart was in the left but its wallet in the right.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Sowerwine (2001), 44–45, 84.

⁴⁷ Concept of socialism used by the Radical Party did not refer to marxist notion of socialism but rather to the cause of poor. De Tarr(1961), 11.

⁴⁸ Original distinction between liberal and radical-liberal political parties was that liberals emphasized more economic liberalism and radicals focused more on enlargement of political rights. Exact difference between liberal and radical traditions is hard to pinpoint in 20th century according to von Beyme due to acceptance of mass politics by the liberal tradition in the late 19th century. Economically line between them is also blurry due to rise of social liberal thought which is more approving to state intervention in the beginning of the 20th century. Von Beyme (1985),

⁴⁹ Bernstein (2004),99–101,Sowerwine (2001), 83–88. Von Beyme (1985),36, 279.

The main goal of the party was to achieve total separation between the state and the church which they achieved in the 1905 laïcité laws. After this, the Radicals lost their driving force and were not able to represent themselves as a reformist political party but rather as a party dedicated to defending both the Third Republic's constitution and social order. This manifested in harsh repression of strikes during Georges Clemenceau's government in 1906–1909 with limited efforts to improve the legal status of trade unions and social security. Implementation of progressive income tax faced many setbacks due to a lack of cohesive economic vision of the party and was implemented only after years of legislative attempts in 1914.⁵⁰

The party, however, was able to remain the most important party of the Third Republic after 1902 frequently changing coalitions often providing prime minister and other key ministers to governments. This decisive position of the Radical Party in the political spectrum crumbled in the founding of the Fourth Republic in 1946 after WWII when the Radicals were discredited by new rising political forces, the Gaullists and the Communists, as representatives of decadent Third Republic which had faced its end in WWII. They still remained influential in the Fourth Republic as a part of the Third Force coalition which wanted to keep both the Gaullists and the Communists out of power. End of the Radical Party as an independent political force came with the institution of the Fifth Republic and bipolarization of the political system into the Gaullist right and its allies against the Socialist Party and its allies. The Radical Party split in 1972 over the Common program when a left-wing faction decided to form *Parti Radical de Gauche*, which became a close ally to the Socialists, the remainder of the party aligned themselves with centrist UDF.⁵¹

The Radical Party faced significant electoral defeat in the legislative elections of 1919 when right-wing Bloc National won a landslide victory. This was the only legislative term of the Third Republic when the Radical Party was not able to join any government coalitions due to the large “Blue chamber” majority. During this time Édouard Herriot succeeded longtime leader Clemenceau as the president of the party. He was able to form an alliance with the socialist SFIO against the Bloc even after

⁵⁰Sowerwine (2001), 85–91.

⁵¹Sowerwine (2001), 236–237, 317, 375–379

they refused to join the government directly. The main agendas which united these parties were a defense of the *laïcité*, especially after the right-wing government's decision not to introduce these laws in reincorporated Alsace-Lorraine, conciliatory stance toward trade unions after series of strikes in the aftermath of WWI and criticism toward aggressive foreign policies pursued against Germany and its war reparations. Economic policies, which would eventually lead to the collapse of the *Cartel des Gauches*, proved to be fundamentally different between the two parties, however. As mentioned earlier, the Radical Party pursued interests of the middle-classes with their economic liberal policies which contrasted with SFIO which objective was the nationalization of key industries and state-run economy with comprehensive social security.⁵²

The attitude of the Radical Party toward democratization in the form of the women's suffrage and legal status of trade unionism was rather ambiguous at the time. At the same time, the party was progressivist in its outlook compared to the right-wing parties which emphasized social order and national renewal. In practice, the party's policies toward these two subjects were rather ambiguous in that regard that even though party officially was supportive of improvements of women's and trade unionists' situation, all their efforts to bring legislation in these areas met resistance from the senate in which the Radical Party had an absolute plurality during the interwar era. This resulted ultimately in a total of eight attempts to introduce the women suffrage during the interwar period, all of them passed in the national assembly but all of them were blocked by the senate. The reason for this could be attributed to their defense of the republic in which the Radicals had become practically the natural governing party which would only alter the system if it did not endanger its dominance.⁵³

2.2.2 Other political parties of the French Third Republic

In order to understand other political parties and labels they used to describe themselves, it is imperative to explain the concept of *sinistrisme*. *Sinistrisme* is a term that describes a gradual shift of leftist parties to the centre or centre-right over time.

⁵² Tint (1980), 20–23.

⁵³ Sowerwine (2001), 124–125, Bury (2003), 205–208.

Since new political parties emerged during the 19th and 20th centuries, previously firmly leftist parties found themselves in a new position. This was a case for the Radical Party which we have discussed in the previous chapter; it started as a radically republican party but over time evolved into a moderate party. Since the right-wing parties referred to monarchist forces during the Third Republic, the term basically disappeared during the later period of the republic as monarchism lost its' electoral power. As such republican centre-right and right-wing parties referred themselves as belonging to the political left, for example, Democratic Republican Alliance's parliamentary group was named "*républicains de gauche*", republicans of the left.⁵⁴

On the right-wing of the Third Republic there existed two major bourgeoisie parties, Republican Federation (Fédération républicaine, FR) and aforementioned Democratic Republican Alliance (Alliance républicaine démocratique, ARD). These two parties were formed by former Opportunist Republicans (Républicains opportunistes⁵⁵) in 1901 and 1903. Both of these parties had their bases in the middle class and business community and as such advocated limited state intervention in the economic affairs. Of these two RF was more conservative and as such opposed to laicite. They were also anti-Dreyfusian in the affair and as such served as the main opposition to the Radical-led governments⁵⁶.

ARD was more centrist of the two parties. Unlike the RF, ARD advocated secularism and was pro-Dreyfusian. As such it served as a partner for the Radical party both before and after WWI. Its' leading figure was Raymond Poincaré who served as a President (1913-1920) and prime minister (1912-1913, 1922-1924 and 1926-1929) of the republic. Most notably ARD was the leading part of the Bloc National government, an alliance of right-wing parties, during 1919-1924. This government was notable for its' ardent opposition to the rising socialist labor movement and strict attitude toward Germany in their war reparations. After Bloc National, these parties served as the main opposition during the Left Cartel and as governmental parties following the breakdown of cooperation between Radicals and Socialists in 1926. Both ARD and RF participated in governments for the rest of the Third Republic, both

⁵⁴ Rémond (1982), 390-391.

⁵⁵ This was a group of moderate republicans during the early parts of the Third Republic.

⁵⁶ McMillan (1985), 35.

parties practically ceased to exist following the French defeat in WWII. Due to their cooperation with the Vichy regime, the two parties lost their legitimacy and were not able to regain their former status in the following Fourth Republic (1946-1958).⁵⁷

On the political left, the French Section of the Workers' International (Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière, SFIO) served as the main socialist party during the Third Republic. Formed in 1905, the party represented rising labor union movement France and as such, they often found themselves in opposition against bourgeoisie parties. This included Radicals who despite sharing a common goal in laicism had radically differing goals in labor and social affairs. As such their cooperation was often rather uneasy; both of the Left Cartel (Cartel des gauches) governments were short-lived. When SFIO was able to suppress the Radical party as the largest party in the 1936 legislative election, cooperation between the parties remained uneasy in the Popular Front government of 1936-1938 and eventually Radicals broke from the coalition in order to govern with support from the right.⁵⁸

SFIO suffered a split in the congress of Tours in 1920 when a pro-soviet faction of the party broke off and formed the French Communist Party (Parti communiste français, PCF). PCF was more radical in its' goals than SFIO in order to build a socialist state, often advocating revolutionary action against the bourgeoisie order. As such the party was in fierce opposition against both SFIO, the Radical Party and the bourgeoisie parties. Thus PCF did not participate in governments or supported a one during the Third Republic aside from the short period of the Popular Front government which they saw as a necessary safeguard against rising fascism.⁵⁹

2.3 Previous cooperation between the liberal and socialist parties

Both in Britain and France, the liberal parties had a history of working with the socialist left. In Britain, this began in 1903 when the first lib-lab pact between the Liberal Party and the Labour Party⁶⁰ was made. This pact lasted through the WWI when the Liberals split. The nature of this pact was mainly electoral in working

⁵⁷ McMillan (1985), 89-90, 149.

⁵⁸ Turunen (2019), 79-82.

⁵⁹ Turunen (2019), 93-95, 103-104.

⁶⁰ Then named as the Labour Representation Committee.

together during the elections of the early 20th century; this included the allied parties not to put competing candidates in certain constituencies. The alliance was successful in that regard the Liberal Party was able to score a landslide victory in the general election of 1906 and the Labour Party was able to increase its seats significantly from two to 29. In the legislation two parties were not in close cooperation due to a large Liberal majority which rendered support from the Labour unnecessary. The Liberals did, however, introduce improvements to the legal position of trade unions (Discussed more in chapter 3) and social security which were advanced also by the Labour.⁶¹

This situation changed when the Liberal Party lost its parliamentary majority in both of the general elections of 1910. In order to stay in the office, Asquith had to rely on both the Labour and the Irish parliamentary party's support. Again significance of the Labour was rather minor in the legislation due to lack balance of power status in the parliament, the Liberals relied more on the Irish support in the legislation. More formal cooperation between the Labour and the Liberals ensued when Asquith enlarged his government to include both Conservatives and the Labour in 1915 after in order to build a unified home front during WWI. The Labour's leading politicians were given offices during this time; for example then the leader of the Labour, Arthur Henderson was given the presidency of the Board of education. This experience in the cabinet proved to important factor later when the Labour Party aimed at proving its fitness to govern in the 1920s.⁶²

In France cooperation between the liberal parties and the socialist left started in 1899 when the Radicals, secular opportunist republicans, and socialist forces united their forces in order to defend the Republic from the reactionary forces in the aftermath of the Dreyfus affair. This alliance, known as Bloc des Gauches, won the legislative election of 1902 and formed a government under Émile Combes. The socialists supported but did not provide any ministers to the government due to their refusal to join any government with bourgeoisie parties. Bloc des Gauches pursued notably strong anticlerical agenda which eventually culminated in laic laws of 1905 which strictly separated the churches and the state and greatly limited rights of the

⁶¹ Thorpe (2001), 7–15.

⁶² Ibid, 18–19.

congregation's activities. Otherwise, the different parties in the coalition did not agree on other political agendas such as social reform, and the alliance was continued in legislative elections of 1906 due to SFIO's affiliation with the second International.⁶³

The Radicals, which have evolved to a rather moderate party at the time, made governmental cooperation mostly with the Democratic Republican Alliance instead of the socialists until the end of the WWI when the ARD formed Bloc National with other right-wing parties in order to pressure greater reparations from Germany and to oppose communism in the aftermath of the Russian revolution, which had generated a significant anti-socialist reaction in France. The Bloc's landslide victory in the legislative election of 1919 was caused partially by the Radical Party's isolate position due to its inability to form an alliance with the socialists who were still not eager to cooperate with the bourgeoisie parties. Only after the Tours Congress in which the SFIO split it became possible for the reformist wing to collaborate with the Radicals although they would not be able to join the government with them officially in a fear of communists' accusations about abandoning the socialist principles.⁶⁴

3. The attitudes of liberals toward trade unions

Trade unionism is one of the main characteristics of many parties of the socialist left-wing parties in Europe. Even after links between the major political parties and trade unions have weakened since the late 20th century when social democratic parties began to emphasize more centrist positions in order to appeal to the middle classes⁶⁵, trade unions still shape political landscape significantly. During their beginnings in the late 19th century trade unions proved to be the major organizational networks for the socialist left which, unlike the liberal and conservative parties, was first formed outside of national parliaments. Trade union membership also provided economical resources for the socialist parties which prompted them to recruit as many members as possible in order to represent themselves as representatives of the working class. Thus the socialist parties in Western Europe became the first mass-parties in many

⁶³ Bury (2003), 204–205.

⁶⁴ Bury (2003), 252–255, Sowerwine (2001), 123.

⁶⁵ This tendency is known as the Third Way politics which is redefinition of the ideas advanced by centre-left political parties in the face of neoliberalism. These new ideological trends have been popularized by Tony Blair's New Labour movement which was an attempt to transform the Labour Party into more centrist positions and to make a break from the traditional trade unionism.

countries, only with few exceptions. These organizational features challenged the traditional cadre-parties, which were mainly electoral organizations which were active only during elections, to adapt to the mass politics.⁶⁶

The level of workers organized into trade unions varied significantly between European countries in the early 20th century, however. This was affected by three different factors that set frameworks for national trade unions and their relations with political parties. The first factor was a level of industrialization which limited the possibilities of how a large proportion of the population, who worked in the industrial work, could potentially be organized into unions. For example, the trade union movement organized earlier and more comprehensively than in lately industrialized countries. The second factor which influenced trade unionism was the success of political parties connected to trade unions in parliaments. In Sweden, the unparalleled success of the Swedish Social Democratic Party has for example affected significantly to both levels of organization of the labor force and the role of corporations in political decision-making processes. The third factor affecting trade unions' status is a number of rivaling political parties with trade union links in the political landscape. The most clearly rivaling political tendencies in this regard have been between the social democratic and communist left which had deeply divided the trade union movement in some of the European countries.⁶⁷

Status of trade unions differed significantly in Britain and France during the 1920s in both their organization and political influence. In Britain, a link between the Labour party and trade unions, which were organized into Trades Union Congress (TUC), was close since the founding of the party in 1900. The Labour party's main identity was in trade unionism with an only minor competition with communists and syndicalists⁶⁸ groups and along with Britain's plurality voting electoral voting system, only the Labour party was able to gain representation in the parliament. Due to the stability of the British political system and lack of revolutionary sentiment in British unions, the major mode of action by unions has been reforming labor situation into more fair

⁶⁶ Upurch et al (2009), 1–3, Von Beyme (1985), 59–60.

⁶⁷ Upurch et al (2009), 1–3.

⁶⁸ Syndicalism is an ideology which advocates to removal of capitalism and replacing it with small societies in industries are ruled by the workers. It is distinct from communism by its strong emphasis on trade unionism in order to change prevailing economic system.

through the legal parliamentary framework with strikes as a last-resort pressure action.⁶⁹

In France, the status of trade unionism differed in its methods, organization, and links to political parties. Unlike Britain, a structure of trade unions was decentralized in France during the 1920s and as such, they had only weak links with left-wing parties. Further fragmentation of trade unionism ensued from the split of SFIO into moderates, who continued under the old name of the party, and into the revolutionary Communist Party of France after the Congress of Tours in 1920. Alongside these two political parties, revolutionary syndicalist unions were aiming at revolutionary actions through a series of strikes, and ultimately by a general strike in order to topple the capitalist mode of production. Because of these factors, the labor markets of France during the interwar period were unstable due to frequent strikes which often faced heavy responses from employers and governments.⁷⁰

In this chapter I am going to study debates in the national parliaments of Britain and France during the research period. As a specific point of interest, my analysis is going to cover how the liberal parties comprehended the role of trade unions and strikes as an action. Another important notion about Liberals' understanding of trade unions is how they positioned themselves in these parliamentary debates toward socialist and other parties.

3.1 Debate about amendments to the Trade Union Act 1913

The history of trade unionism in Britain started during the 19th century when many craft-based industries began to lobby the parliament in order to enlarge voting rights to the working class. Status of trade unions was legalized early during the 1870s when the Trade Union Act 1871 guaranteed the right for labor to organize and to act collectively. In the beginning, employers encouraged workers to organize themselves into trade unions in order to be able to rationalize the work processes to more efficient. The goal of employers was also to create a more stable framework for solving industrial disputes which in certain important sectors could severely affect the

⁶⁹ Upurch et al (2009), 81–89.

⁷⁰ Upurch et al (2009), 113–119

whole economy. The status of trade unions in political decision-making processes was however negligible due to lack of parliamentary representation and local character of trade unions. Also, employers' right to demand compensation for damage caused by striking action limited considerably unions' abilities to further their goals.⁷¹

One of the most important events in the position of trade unions of Britain was the Trade Disputes Act 1906 which was introduced by the Liberal government of Cambell-Bannerman. According to this law trade unions were recognized as incorporated associations and ruled that unions could not be sued for damage caused by striking. This essentially gave juridical immunity to trade unions against employers in their bid for collective action and encouraged a growing number of workers to join the trade unions.⁷²

The Trades Disputes Act was according to George Dangerfield one of the greatest turning points for the Liberal Party and its relations with business in that regard that the Liberals had sided clearly with the labor against capital in that question. He wrote that the bill was:

“Hastily a Trade Disputes Bill was prepared, hastily enacted. It gave the Unions an astounding, indeed an unlimited immunity. Labour was jubilant. The most powerful Government in history had been compelled, by scarcely more than a single show of power, to yield to the just demands of organized workers.”⁷³

This act caused owners of capital to align themselves increasingly with the Conservative Party and thus eroded the traditional supporting base of the middle-classes toward the Liberal Party. According to Dangerfield reformist agenda forwarded by the Liberals left them in an unpleasant situation in which they could no longer appear as a defender of commerce, an element which has been one of the most prominent distinctive features of the party during the 20th century. The rise of the Labour Party limited in the other end of the political spectrum their attempts to showcase themselves as a defender of the working-class. Due to this strong class

⁷¹ Howell, Chris (2007), 46–47, 61, 66–69.

⁷² Ibid, 62–63.

⁷³ Dangerfield, George (1935), 187.

identity of the Labour Party, the Liberal Party could only attract limited support from the working class which did not neglect the Liberals because of their political agendas but because of what they were, a bourgeois party.⁷⁴

The legal situation of trade unions was not solved totally by the Trade Disputes Bill and strikes continued frequently. Also, funding of the Labour Party by trade unions' membership fees caused significant controversy soon after the bill was passed in the parliament. This led to so-called Osborne judgment in 1910 which required that members of trade unions must opt-in if they wanted their membership fees to go to funding political actions. This was crucial to the Labour Party which relied heavily on unions funding in its finances and they were already significantly in a weaker position financially than the other parliamentary parties. Because of this interruption of its fundamental source of income, the Labour Party was heavily reliant on cooperation with the Liberal Party when contesting both of the 1910 general elections. Although the Liberals were weakened by the elections, they could pass two pieces of the legislature under the premiership of Asquith which would soon prove to be substantive for the Labour Party's fortunes. First was a decision to grant salaries to members of the parliament which greatly reduced a need for funding of political parties from other sources. The second measure pursued by the Liberal government was a revision of Osborne's judgment in that regard that trade union could decide to establish a political fund which could be used to fund political activities. This legal reform was introduced as the Trade Union Act 1913. Since political funds could be used practically only to fund the Labour Party, unions' voting about a political fund became voting whether to support the party or not, and many unions decided to establish political funds. It also provided union members to opt-out from political levies if they specifically objected.⁷⁵

The first cabinet of McDonald's had to soon make its stance toward trade unions after its formation. Due to the aforementioned lack of majority in the parliament, the government did not put forward any significant legal action during its term of office. Instead, debates concerning trade unions rose from bills proposed by the opposition

⁷⁴ Dangerfield (1935), 186–187, 190, Searle (2001), 103–104.

⁷⁵ Thorpe (2001), 18–22.

and governmental actions in solving contemporary strikes. This bill is what I am going to analyze in the following chapter was an amendment to the Trade Union Act 1913 which would have altered the methods of gathering political levies.

The Conservative Party's proposal to add new amendments to the Trade Union Act 1913 was debated in the House of Commons in 14.3.1924. This bill concerned to add amendments that would clarify the opt-outing of the political funds if union members did not want to contribute to political activities. According to the Conservatives opt-outing was a needlessly difficult process as they had to specifically request it from trade union officials. Opting-out of the political funds was perceived also as victimization in their reasoning for the amendments. Trade unions' accounting with membership levies were also criticized by Conservative MPs as they argued that unions used general levies to fund political actions without any legal sanctions.⁷⁶

The main argument presented against the political contributions of trade unions by the Conservatives was that it did not respect the liberty of union members as they could be forced to pay donations to the political party they did not support, unlike other parties which received voluntary donations. For example, Phillip Sassoon⁷⁷ (Conservative)⁷⁸ argued that:

“We have been told that under **Socialism** every citizen will be able to do as he pleases, and that if he does not, he jolly well ought to be made to do so. I think that is a form of **Socialism** which is advocated by the opponents of this Bill. The fact is that the Act of 1913 was loosely constructed and has broken down in practice. It was designed to ensure secrecy of ballot and to preserve **liberty** of choice. It has, as a matter of fact, done neither. There can be no secrecy where a man has to declare his views to obtain exemption, and there can be no liberty where every obstruction is put in the way of his obtaining his right to exemption.”⁷⁹

⁷⁶ HoC Hansard 14.3.1924, cc 2743–2745.

⁷⁷ Personal information for British MPs are from UK parliamentary papers.

⁷⁸ Sassoon (1888–1939) was a baronet of Jewish house of Sassoon. He was also notable art collector, soldier and social host. He did become the first Commissioner of Works and Public Buildings in 1937, an office in which he worked until his death.

⁷⁹ HoC Hansard 14.3.1924, cc 2789.

Sassoon's speech shows two of the most characteristic concepts used by the Conservatives during the debate. The first one of these was the excessive use of socialism as an adjective of the Labour Party's policies. This concept was mainly used with pejorative connotations in describing policies pursued by the Labour government and was used as an alternative name to the party since many Conservatives called it "the Socialist Party"⁸⁰. The use of this concept by Conservatives could be explained with their status as a party of the capital and higher classes, a factor which made many of them skeptical toward trade unions and the socialist left, especially after the Russian revolution. Their pejorative viewpoints toward them can also be an account of frequent striking, which was strongly associated with trade unionism, and damage caused by it to their business.

The second quintessential concept utilized by the Conservative Party in the debate was liberty, which was used mostly in the relation between workers and trade unions. Although trade unions themselves were seen by them serving a useful function, the compulsory political levy of the unions for all members disregarding their political viewpoints was seen as an anomaly. This was contrasted by Charles Ainsworth (Conservative)⁸¹ with funding of the other parties, who relied primarily on voluntary donations. This was contrasted with the funding of the Labour which did receive part of its funding from people who did not consciously support its agendas. The ultimate argument presented by the Conservative was thus that the government did not value the liberty of people and for this reason, the amendments pursued by them were necessary for safeguarding liberty.⁸²

The Labour government rejected these accusations that the Trade Union act had led to compromising the liberty of members of trade unions. Instead, they claimed that amendments forwarded by the Conservatives would secure only the liberty of

⁸⁰ For example, HoC Hansard 14.3.1924, cc 2743, 2777, 2789.

⁸¹ HoC Hansard 14.3.1924, cc 2745. Charles Ainsworth was a businessman in textile industry and officer in Lancashire.

⁸² HoC Hansard 14.3.1924, cc 2744–2746, 2778, 2789–2790.

employers at the price of workers. For example, Thomas Williams (Labour)⁸³ argued that:

“It seems to me that the only **liberty** and freedom desired in this Bill is, not that the workmen shall be at liberty to do as they wish, but that the employers shall be at **liberty** in the future to do just as they have been doing in the past with regard to their workpeople.”⁸⁴

The liberty was thus not conceived by Williams concerning individuals like the Conservatives had conceived but as a part of a larger group. Notable about his and other Labour MPs’ speeches⁸⁵ was that their conception of liberty included notions about social classes such as workers and employers. Usually, these two classes were seen as opposed to each other’s interests and for this reason liberty of employers was seen as something which would be absent from the working class. The Conservative party itself was most often seen as the main force which would do anything in order to hamper activities of trade unions, some MPs even claimed that the only reason the amendments were presented was a fear of electoral progress of the Labour Party, a fact which was argued to be anxious for the Conservatives⁸⁶. This notion resembles the Marxist notion of class conflict in which the interests of the capitalist and working class was seen in contradiction with each other. Alongside socialist influences, these conceptions could be explained by the position of the Labour Party as a representative of the working class, a factor which was evidenced in the backgrounds of many MPs of the party.

Another notable conception about the role of trade unions by the Labour was a notion about activities of trade unions as being a democratic model. A concept of democracy was used positively in regards to trade unions and the bill was seen compromising the principles of democratic rules in preventing consenting members to contribute to political funds if few individuals rejected political levies. Many Labour MPs presented alternative possibilities of what would happen if trade unions could not contribute

⁸³ Thomas Williams (1888–1967) was a coal miner and MP of Don Valley in South Yorkshire during 1922–1959.

⁸⁴ HoC Hansard 14.3.1924, cc.2772–2773.

⁸⁵ For example HoC Hansard 14.3.1924, cc. 2768, 2784–2786.

⁸⁶ HoC Hansard 14.3.1924, cc.2767.

funds to political parties; the most common alternative was an increase of striking action if the bill would be passed. Between those two alternatives, Tom Smith (Labour) for example argued that he hoped that the house would agree to bring progress by the constitutional framework rather than strike weapon which he saw as last resort. He thus advised that trade unions should not be interrupted in their fundraising in a fear of endangering social reforms through the parliament⁸⁷. These speech acts could be interpreted as a legitimization of the Labour Party as a party that respected the constitution and did not seek a change through extra-parliamentary action. This was likely motivated by accusations made by other parties that the Labour was a revolutionary and socialist party; these were especially common conceptions of the Conservatives.

The Liberals positioned themselves on the debate in the side of the Labour government in opposing the bill. Instead of using liberty as a predominant concept like the Conservatives and the Labour when speaking about the status of trade unions, the Liberals used mainly the concept of “fairness” in legitimizing the legal status of trade unions in the 1913 act. For example, Herbert Willison (Liberal)⁸⁸ argued that:

“I am certain that no member of the party to which I belong wishes to assist either in victimization or in undue oppression, neither do we want to assist any trade union members or secretaries in muddling their accounts. Far be it from us that we should want to do anything of the kind. What we in the Liberal party want to see is **fair** dealing for all.”⁸⁹

Willison’s speech later remarked that employers’ organizations and voluntary organizations were not included in the bill, and for this fact he argued that political funding would become unjust for the Labour. John Simon (Liberal) also argued that in a modern society like Britain organizations should be able to have their voices heard in politics if they consented to political agendas forwarded by them. He also remarked that the Trade Union Act worked well for the majority of members of unions and for

⁸⁷ HoC Hansard 14.3.1924, cc 2769.

⁸⁸ Herbert Willison was a solicitor and MP of Nuneaton during 1923–1924.

⁸⁹ HoC Hansard 14.3.1924, cc. 2780.

this reason the bill was unnecessary⁹⁰. Frank Raffety (Liberal) noted in his speech also that the bill did not represent democratic principles and as such was not a proper answer in solving irregularities in trade unions' activities. Instead, he proposed that the government should do everything to increase the efficiency of trade unions in order for them to become more attractive for workers and by gaining a higher proportion of workers membership unions could become true representatives of their interests.⁹¹

The second important conception utilized by the Liberals was an idea of representation of the interests of supporters of a political party. This meant for Liberals that MPs of any respective parties should put forward political agendas that were supported by a significant number of electors. Herbert Willison (Liberal) used this as an argument against the Conservative MPs such Ainsworth since they claimed that tens of workers in their constituencies had complained about opt-outing procedures. This was seen by him as a frail argument which did not legitimize a change of the whole act of parliament in order to fix.⁹² The same conception of representation was also used to criticize the Labour government in a lack of their commitments to their electoral manifestos; this led Frank Gray (Liberal) to accuse the Labour:

“I know some Members, particularly those on the Front Bench, are as proud as peacocks when they are called **Socialists**; but they are **not Socialists**, they are only a had reproduction of the other side. If you start a political fund on the basis that you are going to obtain this or that, and that you are going in for disarmament, it may well approach false pretenses if you come here and support the acceleration of the building of cruisers.”⁹³

Gray's speech act aimed to remark that the Labour should pay more attention to the wishes of people which they represent or what they had promised to put forward as an agenda. His idea of representation had significant similarities with the idea of an imperative mandate which meant that MP was under an obligation to follow a will of

⁹⁰ HoC Hansard 14.3.1924, cc.2782–2783.

⁹¹ HoC Hansard 14.3.1924, cc. 2791. Frank Raffety was a barrister and MP of Bath.

⁹² HoC Hansard 14.3.1924, cc. 2780.

⁹³ HoC Hansard 14.3.1924, cc. 2804. Frank Gray was a solicitor and MP of Oxford during 1922–1924.

electors. As an example, he raised the government's cruiser program which the Liberals saw as a violation of antimilitaristic political programs made by the Labour Party prior to the elections. He also noted that the government party did not make significantly any policies by which it could earn fame as a socialist party; this was in contrast with the Conservatives who described the Labour Party as socialist frequently.

Reasons for these speech acts made by the MPs of the Liberal Party could be explained by legal improvements made by the governments, which were composed of Liberals, prior to WWI. Because the purpose of the amendments was to practically overturn the act which they had implemented, all of the Liberal MPs opposed the bill. The defense of fundraising for political activities by lobbying organizations such as trade unions could be explained by the reliance of the party on voluntary donations of individuals and voluntary organizations, which were perceived similarly to trade unions by the Liberals. For this reason, it was natural for the Liberals to grant a capacity of the same level as they had to the Labour in the form of trade unions' political funds. The accusations about the Labour's lack of commitment to its socialist principles and its moderate policies are explained by fear of the Liberals towards the Labour's goal to attract middle-class support, which was crucial to the Liberal Party, in addition to notions of Labour's disrespect for its electors.

3.2 French debate about granting amnesty for strikers of 1920

French Chamber of Deputies debated about granting a general amnesty for those convicted during 1914-1924 for crimes related to wartime. The amnesty law was debated in the Chamber of deputies during 9-14 of July in 1924. This amnesty included multiple categories of people such as deserters, those involved in price manipulations and those who had spread anti-war propaganda. Most importantly for this thesis, the amnesty included participants of the railway strike of 1920. This strike was organized by Confédération Générale du Travail (C.G.T), a trade union which was dominated by revolutionary Marxist at the time. Since issues of amnestying deserters and other people who were deemed against the war effort are not related to trade unions and thus comparable to British debates, debates analyzed here will be limited to those directly concerning the strike of 1920.

René Renoult⁹⁴ (Radical) as a minister of justice laid the main principles of amnesty during his speech in 10.7.1924. He saw amnesty as a trait of the republican type of governance. Since France was a free and democratic country, it was a natural part for her to forgive those who had performed crimes during extraordinary conditions. In order to strengthen his argumentation for the amnesty bill, he cited the amnesty granted for participants of Paris Commune in 1871. Those involved in this uprising were amnestied by 1880, this was comparable time for the amnesty bill debated at the time according to him. As such he drew a comparison between Paris communards and deserters, antiwar advocates and railway workers.⁹⁵

Renoult's notions were interesting in two regards. Firstly, his conception that republicanism had a tendency toward forgiveness instead of cracking down approach is interesting since the French Third Republic had put emphasis on building republican identity. This conception can be explained by two explanations, by his party's ardent republicanism and by emphasizing national identity. Since Radicals were strong in their support of the republic, it made sense for them to attribute positive traits to it as opposed to other systems that were more unforgiving. This is likely reference to previous imperial and monarchist regimes that were strict toward their opposition. Secondly, his comparison between the situations of 1871 and 1914-1920 is notable due to them having different aims. While both revolts occurred during a war, the goal of these rebellions was different in scope. Paris commune aimed at outlawing the existing system whereas uprisings during WWI and its aftermath were more limited. This can be explained by his negative conceptions of trade union activism which at the time had revolutionary characteristics in France. Alternatively, he just wanted to point that the amnesty bill had historical precedents and was not a singular piece of legislation.

⁹⁴ René-Renoult was a Radical deputy of Haute-Saône during 1902-1919. He was also a Senator during 1920-1944 and minister on multiple occasions, most notably minister of justice during 1924-1926 and 1932. He was a lawyer prior to his political career. Personal information of French deputies presented on footnotes are from National Assembly's database of old deputies (<http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/recherche>)

⁹⁵ JORF, 10.7.1924, pp. 2561-2564.

The amnesty for railway workers was debated mostly on 12.7. Debate on that day was begun by Victor Peytral⁹⁶ (Radical) who as a minister of public works stated the main position of the government. For him the strike was caused by war exhaustion and expectations of being rewarded for their war effort;

“Il ne faut pas méconnaître les causes véritables de la grève de 1920. Les fautes qui ont été commises à ce moment par les cheminots ont eu la même origine que celles qui sont visées dans le projet d'amnistie je veux parler des fatigues et des souffrances morales et physiques endurées pendant les cinq années de guerre. Les cheminots, tous les cheminots, ont été admirables pendant la guerre. Ils ont fait leur devoir, avec courage. Il ne faut pas oublier qu'ils sont allés sur le front et que beaucoup avaient des enfants dans les tranchées. Ils ont subi l'état moral du pays, il n'est donc pas étonnant qu'ils se soient laissés emporter, eux aussi, par la vague de découragement et de colère qui a passé.”⁹⁷

Alongside the bravery that railway workers had shown during the war, Peytral argued that it was the government's responsibility to ensure the goodwill of railway workers since it was crucial economically. Since whole economic life depended on railways working smoothly, he argued that by amnestying dismissed railway workers was the best way to ensure stability in railways. On the other hand, he reminded that the government should not tolerate such strikes during normal circumstances since they could cripple the economy. As such he saw the strike of 1920 as an exceptional case that was excusable by the war and its aftermath.⁹⁸

Peytral's speech is interesting in that regard that it shows his general attitude toward strikes and governmental responsibility. While he saw the strike of 1920 as justifiable,

⁹⁶ Victor Peytral was a radical deputy of Hautes-Alpes during 1912-1919. He also served as a senator during 1920-1930 and minister of public works during 1924-1925.

⁹⁷ JORF, 12.7.1924, pp 2649. Translation ” The real causes of of the 1920 strike must not be ignored. The faults of the railway workers had the same origin as those other people by the amnesty project, by this I mean the fatigue alongside moral and physical suffering endured during five years of war. All of the railway workers were admirable during the war. They did their responsibilities with courage. It must not be forgotten that went to the front when they had children. They suffered from the moral state of the country, as such it is not surprising that they were carried away by wave of passing discouragement and anger.

⁹⁸ JORF, 12.7.1924, pp. 2647-2649.

this was under the abnormal situation which was affecting the whole country. As such he saw the strikers as being affected by same war fatigue which had caused other groups of people to act against laws and regulations. Since the amnesty bill concerned other categories than just strikers, this is understandable. His idea that it was the government's duty to safeguard workers' rights and living instead of trade unions is notable in that regards that he delegitimized the role of trade unions. As a representative of the government, this conception can be explained as an attempt by him to emphasize his role in improving the status of railway workers by parliamentary means as opposed to unparliamentarily ones.

The idea of an amnesty was defended by deputies of the left. Clotaire Delourme⁹⁹ (Communist) brought many misfortunes faced by people who were associated with trade unions. This included arbitrary dismissals of civil servants and workers on the ground of their political leanings during the National Bloc government. As such he praised the government for fixing such abuses of power and bringing peace back to workplaces.¹⁰⁰ Similar praises for the government was provided by Jean Chastanet¹⁰¹ (Socialist) in his speech. For him dismissing workers based on their political leanings had to stop in order for a fair and stable situation to return. This was especially true since both Catholic unions and C.G.T had participated in strikes together but only members of C.G.T had received punitive actions later. Furthermore, these dismissals usually were not based on individual performance but rather on political actions. This was according to him unacceptable since many railway workers had done an exemplary job in both trenches and in their normal work.¹⁰²

These speeches made by leftist deputies are interesting in contrast to ones made by Radicals. Unlike Radicals who the strike of 1920 being motivated by war exhaustion and demands of reward due to their war effort, the leftist deputies saw clear political motivation behind them. For them, the strike happened because of arbitrary dismissals based on political affiliation. Interestingly they also tried to depoliticize demands

⁹⁹ Clotaire Delourme was a Communist deputy of Nord during 1924-1928. He was a teacher by profession.

¹⁰⁰ JORF, 12.7, 1924 pp. 2651-2652.

¹⁰¹ Jean Chastanet was a Socialist deputy of Isère during 1924-1936. He was a journalist and trade union activist prior to his political career.

¹⁰² JORF, 12.7, 1924, pp. 2652.

made by Marxist trade unions by mentioning other unions pursuing the same agendas. This is likely an effort to show that they were not alone in their struggle to raise standards of living for workers.

The bill's attempt to give amnesty for dismissed railway workers did receive criticism from deputies of right-wing parties. Yves Le Trocquer¹⁰³ (ARD) openly claimed that reinstatement of dismissed railway workers would bring instability to railways. He openly accused the Communist party that this reinstatement as part of their plan to prepare for revolution. As such he accused the government of caving to the communist agenda of disrupting social order which he saw crucial at the moment. In addition, he saw the reinstatement of dismissed workers with getting the same benefits as those who had been on work during those four years as an insult toward work ethics. Since disobedience like this was rewarded instead of punished, he saw the government policy as advocating interests of few unions instead of all French.¹⁰⁴ Ernest Outrey¹⁰⁵ (Independent Radical¹⁰⁶) shared similar sentiments when accusing the government from forgetting other groups while advocating amnesty. These included the dismissal of civil servants due to financial difficulties faced by the previous government and those mutilated during the war. For Outrey both of these groups which had worked hard for their motherland without a fault for many years were much more justified of receiving government's effort of reintegration to society than strikers. As such he accused the government of forgetting them by casting such injustice toward their efforts by praising those who had violated the law.¹⁰⁷

These speeches by opposition deputies are notable in that regard that they openly put interests of trade unions against other parts of society. Comparisons made between strikers and war veterans are understandable since right-wing deputies tried to represent themselves as defenders of patriotism and the war effort. In addition, an open accusation that the goal of amnesty was to prepare for revolution is unique in that regard that it openly linked causes of trade unions and revolutionary Marxism.

¹⁰³ Yves Le Trocquer was a ARD deputy of Côtes-du-Nord during 1919-1930. In addition he served as a senator during 1930-1938 and as a minister of public works during 1920-1924.

¹⁰⁴ JORF, 12.7.1924, pp. 2653-2654, 2657.

¹⁰⁵ Ernest Outrey was a Independent Radical deputy of Cochinchine française during 1914-1936. He was involved with colonial business prior to his political career.

¹⁰⁶ Independent Radicals were a parliamentary group which rejected leftist alliances of Radical Party.

¹⁰⁷ JORF, 12.7.1924, pp. 2674.

This is likely influenced by the Red scare which was caused by the establishment of the Soviet Union as the first communist state in the world. Additionally strikes specifically targeted toward railways could have been linked by these speakers to October's revolution in which seizure of railways played a pivotal role.

3.3 Comparison of British and French liberal parties regarding trade unions

Since Britain and France had different kinds of debates related to trade unions in 1924, it is important to keep in mind that they are not directly comparable. We can, however, see general conceptions presented by the liberals regarding the unions. As a whole both liberals and radicals sided with the socialist left during the debate. Aside from the obvious reason being their support and confidence agreements with each other, this position can be explained by their support for improving the welfare of lower parts of society. Since unions shared agenda of introducing basic welfare state with the liberal parties, liberals were often sympathetic toward them.

The role of trade unions themselves divided Liberal and Radicals somewhat. Whereas Liberals generally saw unions as a good way to improve the welfare of the workers, Radicals saw unions as secondary to the governmental business. This manifested itself in Radicals' position that strikes under normal circumstances would not be tolerated while at the same time argued that the government should keep the situation of workers in mind in order to ensure stability. This was in contrast with British Liberals who saw unions as a good way to ensure fair income and contracts. Reasons for this differing perception between the two parties could be explained by the different nature of their dominant trade unions. Whereas TUC was rather moderate and closely related to the Labour party, CGT in France was dominated by revolutionary socialist and was closely related to the French communist party. For this reason, conceptions of trade unions likely differed between the liberal parties; it was much easier to negotiate with moderate trade unions as opposed to ones aiming for overthrowing capitalism itself.

War effort played differently between in the debates. In Britain, it was absent whereas in France it played a significant role in the debate. Part of the primary reason why Radicals were forgiving toward railway strikers was their heroism during the Great War. This is likely related to the fact that other victims of military justice were

debated at the same time; as such the war played an overarching theme that covered railway workers. Also, the war and its' aftermath played a more significant role in France than in Britain, for example, German war reparations caused the occupation of Ruhr.

In terms of links between socialism and trade unions, the two parties had also differing conceptions. Whereas British Liberals associated the Labour party and trade unions with socialist goals, in France such association was not present during the debates. One possible reason for this is the fact that the Radical party had more direct cooperation with the socialist left than cooperation between the Labour and Liberal party which was looser in nature. Additionally, Radical party likely associated socialism in its' own self, after all their official name was *Parti Radical Socialiste* even though word socialist had become artifact title without links to Marxist thought. As such it is likely that French Radicals still associated themselves with the left in their conceptions, unlike Liberals.

Overall both parties shared positions in debates related to trade unions even though their conceptions about both trade unions and socialism differed in significant ways.

4. The attitudes of liberals toward the women's suffrage

The situation of women's suffrage was quite peculiar in both Britain and France in the years after World War I; in Britain suffrage was granted to women by Representation of People's Act 1918 which also included universal suffrage for men for the first time whereas in France women's demands for political representation were left unanswered. Interestingly both of these countries were forerunners in democratic reforms and parliamentary government but in the introduction of women's suffrage, they found themselves lagging behind for some time. Britain was a rather peculiar case in this regard that it was one of the few countries¹⁰⁸ in Europe to introduce different requirements for men and women in order to vote; the age requirement for men was 21 years while for women it was 30 years following Representation of People's Act 1918. As such, women's suffrage continued to be an issue that was debated in parliaments during the 1920s.

¹⁰⁸ The only other country to have different requirements regarding gender was Hungary, which limited suffrage for women over age of 24 whereas it was 21 for men.(Sulkunen et al (2009), 242-243.

In Britain, the first Labour government tried to bring legislation in order to remove the inequality of suffrage between men and women in February 1924 when their bill received its second reading. It was eventually unsuccessful as the Labour party did not govern a majority in the House of Commons and did not progress into third reading. In France, the National Assembly also debated about women's suffrage in spring 1925 regarding municipal and cantonal elections. This initiative also did not go anywhere due to various factors. I have analyzed these debates in the following chapter.

4.1 Women's suffrage debate in Britain

On the 29th of February in 1924 the House of Commons debated about an amendment bill of Representation of People's Act 1918 which was introduced by the Labour Government. The main content of the bill was to make age requirements of the franchise the same for both men and women. It also tried to base franchise solely upon residence (except for university franchise) and to assimilate local franchise into the general one. As such it had many elements that were debated by various speakers.

Since the Labour government introduced the bill, Labour MPs defended it in their speeches. In his beginning speech to move the bill, William M. Adamson (Labour)¹⁰⁹ mainly focused on women's equal suffrage and linked other parts of the bill into it. He started his speech by arguing that the main argument against women suffrage, lack of women's political experience, did not hold water anymore since they had acquired plenty of it after gaining franchise. Since the political system of Britain did not crumble after the fact, Adamson did not see any reason not to remove the final inequality between genders.¹¹⁰

The reform of the residency requirements of the bill was also related to women's suffrage according to Adamson. Since either women or their husbands were required to own a house or furnished room in order to gain franchise, it was problematic for many women over 30 years to attain franchise. Adamson argued that it was especially problematic for widows since they often did not legally own their properties. As such, the simplest way to remove such anomalies would have been to base franchise solely

¹⁰⁹ William Adamson was MP for West Fife from 1910 to 1931. He served as a Secretary of State for Scotland for the years 1924 and 1929-1931. His professional background was in trade unions.

¹¹⁰ HoC Hansard 29.2.1924, cc. 859-860, 862.

on residence since it would prevent troublesome cases where women could lose their right to vote despite fulfilling other requirements.¹¹¹

Adamson also mentioned that his party was dedicated to the equal franchise in their party manifesto. He also mentioned that both Liberals and many Conservatives had made similar pledges in the past, and as such were expected to show sympathy to the bill.¹¹² This mention of electoral promises was likely motivated by the need of the Labour government to secure support from the other parties in order to pass legislation. The pursuit of showing that the Labour Party was able to advance its' electoral promises was also probably behind these mentions.

Dorothy Jewson (Labour)¹¹³ continued the debate by supporting the bill in her speech. She saw differing age requirements justified in 1918 when the franchise was given to a great number of people in Britain and as such limitations were needed to safeguard the political system. Since the system had been maintained as it was even after this flood of new electors, there was no reason to maintain restrictions on women's suffrage any longer. She also argued that women have proved themselves to be responsible voters in the three general elections in which they were able to cast a vote. To further prove this point she mentioned that women had been split as same as men regarding politics; they had not grouped together against men or flocked into a single party as had been feared before granting the franchise. Moreover, there would only be about 500 000 more women as electors if men and women had equal requirements. Jewson also mentioned that bills similar to the bill debated were introduced in previous parliaments and as such would deliver the demands of the equal franchise which had been left unfulfilled.¹¹⁴

Interestingly Jewson mentions the peculiar case of Britain in granting women suffrage on different terms than men;

“Great Britain could claim at one time to be the pioneer of representative government, but it is now very much behind on the question of the franchise.

¹¹¹ HoC Hansard 29.2.1924, cc. 861-862.

¹¹² Hoc Hansard 29.2.1924, cc. 860.

¹¹³ Dorothy Jewson was a Labour MP for Norwhich from 1923-1924. She was a teacher by profession.

¹¹⁴ HoC Hansard 29.2.1924, cc. 863-864

Great Britain is alone in Europe, with the exception of Hungary, in granting equal franchise to women. Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Germany have all given equal franchise to women with men, and in our own Dominions. New Zealand and Canada have done the same. Even in the East, Madras, Bombay and Burma have given equal franchise to women with men. Surely the time has come when the Mother of Parliaments should do the same.¹¹⁵

Since the parliament of the United Kingdom is one of the oldest parliaments of the world, it has been seen as an exemplary body that should show the way followed by other parliamentary bodies. Since the large wave of democratization and parliamentatization that followed WWI, many European countries had adopted more modern constitutions than Britain. Jewson saw this as a problem since Britain had maintained an old-fashioned franchise based on gender instead of following contemporary European examples. Her specific mention of Hungary that had similar restrictions could be seen as a way to convince other speakers that Britain should not remain in the same club as Hungary which did not have the same exemplary status as the British parliament which she saw as the mother of Parliaments. In addition, mentions of British Commonwealth nations can be seen as a way for Jewson to make a point that equal suffrage would work in other Westminster system as it would work in Britain. As such Jewson saw the bill as a way to reclaim some of the prestige the British parliament had.

Duchess of Athol (Conservative)¹¹⁶ continued the debate by focusing on different parts of the bill. In her speech, she made points about the bill not being solely a bill to introduce equal franchise between men and women. Basing franchise only to residency instead of ownership of house or room was going to be a drastic change in electoral affairs. That would allow manipulation of constituencies by moving people from one constituency to another and as such cause disturbance in elections in her opinion. As such people like tinkers could cast a vote without fulfilling the basic requirements of normal citizens. She also did not see that tinkers could not cast a vote

¹¹⁵ HoC Hansard 29.2.1924, cc. 865.

¹¹⁶ Also known as Katherine Stewart-Murray. She was a Conservative-Unionist MP for Kinross and West Perthshire from 1923 to 1938.

effectively since they lacked political knowledge. Duchess of Athol also mentioned that assimilation of local and parliamentary franchises would violate the basic principle of “no representation without taxation”. Local elections required people to pay taxes and not be under poor-relief unlike in general elections where there were no such requirements. She argued that in order to be able to decide where tax money would be spending one must have been contributing to those taxes. As such, it would have been a violation of the basic sense of responsible governance to allow people to vote without taxpaying.¹¹⁷

In regards to equal suffrage, she Duchess of Athol was more sympathetic toward the bill. She admitted that anomalies such as women with degrees not being able to vote and men being able to vote without a degree in certain ages have to be fixed alongside questionable situations of widows after the death of their husbands. However, she argued that women were not interested in politics and as such the claims of women demanding political representation were exaggerated. Since both low turnout rates in the last elections and relative lack of women in local bodies showed a lack of political interest of women, there was no urgent need for the bill.¹¹⁸ Her speech was interesting in that regard that she argued that women had no interest in political affairs even if she was a woman with a political career herself. A likely explanation for her dismissive attitudes is that she thought that women were lagging behind in political activity and as such needed more time to adapt to polls. As such time would eventually fix this inactivity of women and thus allow equal franchise when they would be ready.

Similar arguments were put forward by Sydney Russel-Wells (Conservative)¹¹⁹ who argued that while supporting equal suffrage for women, he could not support the bill due to its’ other parts;

“It seems to me that behind the skirts of the women voters, the promoters are sheltering a large number of drastic proposals which would never be considered by this House were they not hitched on to a women's Bill, and I should like to detain the House for a few minutes to analyze some of those

¹¹⁷ HoC Hansard, 29.2.1924, cc. 866-870.

¹¹⁸ HoC Hansard, 29.2.1924, cc. 871-872.

¹¹⁹ Sydney Russel-Wells was a Conservative MP for London University from 1922 to 1924. His civil profession was a physician.

proposals. The first proposal which must attract the attention of anyone reading the Bill is that we are totally altering the whole of our electoral law. It may be wise to alter that law, and it may be wise to make extensive additions to the franchise, but it is not fair to do so in a Bill which is ostentatiously for the promotion of women suffrage.¹²⁰

Russel-Wells speech makes a point against the bill in its' diverse content. While equal women suffrage was seen by him as an admirable goal with virtually no controversy, other parts of the bill were more problematic. As such, it is a shame for him for the Labour government to introduce the bill in such a two-faced fashion.

He continued his speech by making the point against the assimilation of the local franchise into the general one. According to him separation between trustees and beneficiaries was an important cornerstone of local government. Since the bill would have removed limitations imposed on people under poor or union relief for holding positions in local boards, it would have caused anomalous situations where beneficiaries could have ended being trustees themselves. Russel-Wells argued that this idea of responsibility would not be approved by the house. Women's becoming a majority of the electorate was not seen as a problem by him. Instead, this radical change in electoral was to be worried about. As such he called that the bill lacked a guiding principle and the goal of equal suffrage should have been put forward by the non-partisan way instead.¹²¹ This notion is interesting in that regard that electoral eligibility was not seen as a universal right by all Conservative MPs. Instead, a limited franchise, which has ended in 1918 for the general franchise, seems to have retained some support among Conservatives. These viewpoints of Russel-Wells also can be explained by paternalistic views of Conservatism; in order to decide how to use common funds, one must be contributing to them. Otherwise, one was not deemed responsible enough to participate in politics.

¹²⁰ HoC Hansard 29.2.1924, cc. 874.

¹²¹ HoC Hansard 29.2.1924, cc. 877-878.

Margaret Wintringham (Liberal)¹²² continued the debate by noting that women have been divided into political parties in the same way as men. She also mentioned that the debate had already shown that women were not in agreement with each other, specifically mentioning claims that younger women do not want to vote.¹²³ As a comparison point for these claims, she pointed out that agricultural voters were denied a vote with the same argument until the country decided that it needed them. The case was similar with young women who Britain needed right now following their sacrifices in the war. She ended her speech by pointing out that women had a positive influence on legislation in making more humane laws. Wintringham also compared fears of women suffrage and the Labour government; both were feared initially but nothing revolutionary ensued when they were introduced. She further proofed her point that women were ready for the franchise by mentioning that wives had not voted similarly with their husbands. If they had, then the Conservatives would have won the plurality in the house.¹²⁴

Her speech was interesting in a few regards. First, she made the notion that women were able to improve legislation by participating in politics. This is notable since it emphasizes differences between the genders rather than similarities between them. Contrasting this are his mentions that women had not teamed up against men, this is an argument that tries to prove that there are no differences between them. As such her speech made use of both similarities and difference arguments when supporting the equal franchise. Also interesting is the conception of gender balance in the Conservative party, it seems that Wintringham thought that the Conservatives thought that mainly men voted for them. This seems to be part of her idea that the Labour and the Liberals were the ones supporting women suffrage and as such parties of women whereas Conservatives were not as enthusiastic. Her attitude of the first Labour government was also linked to the question of equal suffrage, she thought that the government was doing pretty well considering all fears.

¹²² Margaret Wintringham was a Liberal MP for Louth during 1921-1924. She worked as a teacher before being involved in politics.

¹²³ HoC Hansard 29.21924, cc. 879-880.

¹²⁴ HoC Hansard 29.21924, cc. 880-881.

After her speech, Rhys Davies (Labour)¹²⁵, who was under-secretary of the Home Department, intervened in the debate and clarified some issues of the bill. According to him, 60-years of free education have provided British people enough knowledge to participate in politics. As such he argued that nobody could use an argument of ignorance in defending restrictions on suffrage. For this reason, Britain could afford to allow even housemaids to vote since they had basic knowledge about politics. The bill's provision to remove ownership of residency was to prevent situations where widows could lose their suffrage after their husbands died due to ownership of their residency resting on husband according to him. He further argued that electioneering had not been a significant problem in any other elections he had experienced and as such issue of tinkers was not a significant issue in the bill. Davies ended his speech by saying that Britain should remove all disqualifications in the franchise based on ownership should be removed. Instead, the franchise should be based solely on them being good citizens rather than be based on being sheltered by bricks.¹²⁶

Davies' speech is interesting in that regard that he saw education as a key for political participation. This is notable in that regard that he did not use an argument of the universality of suffrage. This is further reinforced in that being "good" citizens was to be the sole requirement for the franchise; this category is unlikely to include criminals and lunatics. This is in contrast with the modern idea of universal suffrage which could not be lost by criminal activities in most of the western democracies. As such the suffrage was something which could be lost in some situations for Davies, just not for losing ownership of property.

Leo Amery (Conservative)¹²⁷ continued the debate from where Davies left it. For him, the unequal suffrage introduced in the aftermath of the Great War was a compromise that was made in order to soften the introduction of large waves of new electorate. For him there should have been further enlargements of suffrage in since then and as such welcomed the bill's provisions to tackle the issue. Since nobody could argue for

¹²⁵ Rhys Davies was a Labour MP for Westhoughton during 1921-1954. He had his professional background in coal mining and trade unions.

¹²⁶ HoC Hansard, 29.2.1924, cc. 883-884.

¹²⁷ Leo Amery was a Conservative MP for Birmingham South during 1911-1945. He served as the First Lord of Admiralty during 1922-1924 and as the Secretary of State for Colonies during 1924-1929. He had a military background in Colonial areas.

significant differences in psychology between men and women, he thought that the majority of the house would support the equal franchise. As such the equal suffrage could have been passed by a cross-party basis.¹²⁸ Instead he argued that the government had politicked with the issue by linking it to more controversial agendas;

“ But the Under-Secretary has not even given a shadow of assurance that the Government would try to give the time of the House to this Measure or try to induce the House to give this Measure preference over other matters We do not know in the least where we stand. All we know is that a Measure which not only adds 4,500,000 of new voters to the franchise, but which disenfranchises some 200,000 voters and which recasts the whole basis of our electoral system—not omitting tinkers or hotel butterflies from the franchise—that a Measure of this enormous consequence is to be passed after four or five hours of Parliamentary time on a Friday“¹²⁹

As such Amery argued that the bill was being rushed since it has not been given more time to be debated. This was seen by him as an underestimation of the house which was not treated fairly in the allocation of parliamentary time. For this reason, he thought that the bill would need polishing in a committee before it could be passed.¹³⁰

This speech act is notable in that regard that it addresses the idea of fair time in parliamentary debate. Since we have previously stated that the allocation of parliamentary debate is a part of politicking in parliamentary politics, it is often brought up in parliamentary debates. In the case of Amery’s speech where he thought that the issue of equal suffrage deserved more time to be debated. The speech is also showcasing the politicization of the issue, in this case, depoliticization. Amery argued that the issue of equal suffrage was unpolitical at this point and could be put forward without party politics. Instead, the government tried to use the issue as a façade for the bill which contained controversial elements. As such for him, the bill was a bad case for politicking with unpolitical issues.

¹²⁸ Hoc Hansard, 29.2.1924, cc. 887-888.

¹²⁹ Hoc Hansard, 29.2.1924, cc 888.

¹³⁰ Hoc Hansard, 29.2.1924, cc 888-889.

Amery's speech was followed by a speech made by Isaac Foot (Liberal)¹³¹ who dismissed his arguments for focusing irrelevant parts of the bill. Instead, he praised tinkers for providing their services and pointed out that they contributed to the treasury. He further pointed out that the franchise was the greatest protection for the poor since it was their only protection against the legislation. This was in contrast with the rich who could protect themselves with both franchise and wealth. As such introducing suffrage for the most vulnerable was the best thing the parliament could do to them.¹³²

Foot continued his speech by pointing out that women under the age of 30, especially if they were mothers, were among the most vulnerable in the country. This was due to the fact they had no organization to defend them unlike workers, who had trade unions alongside a lack of acknowledgment. As such giving them the right to vote would bring them protection which they sorely lacked. He also pointed out that women under 30 could already stand as candidates in elections even after they lacked the vote, as such there already existed another anomaly in the women's political participation. Foot continued on this anomaly by pointing that many women were capable of great achievements before they were 30, as an example he mentioned Queen Victoria who ascended to the throne when she was 18 years of age and Jane Austen who wrote *Pride and Prejudice* when she was 22 years of age. He ended his speech by dismissing the claims made by earlier speakers that women did not want to vote by quoting John Stuart Mill who had argued that "It is a benefit, to human beings to have their fetters removed even if they do not desire to walk." As such he claimed that the right to vote should not be depended on active political participation, instead, it should be a right which belonged to human beings regardless of their gender.¹³³

References to Mill are crucial because he was associated¹³⁴ with the Liberal party. Mill is considered as one of the most important liberal thinkers of all time due to his contribution to the theory of liberty. He was also notable for being one of the earliest advocates of women suffrage in 1869, Mill wrote a whole essay about the subject

¹³¹ Isaac Foot was a Liberal MP for Bodmin during 1922-1924 and 1929-1935. He was solicitor before his political career.

¹³² Hoc Hansard, 29.2.1924, cc 889-890.

¹³³ Hoc Hansard, 29.2.1924, cc 892-894.

¹³⁴ He was a Liberal MP for Westminster during 1865-1868.

called “the Subjection of Women”. In this essay, he argued that there exist no circumstances where women should not be allowed to vote when men are allowed. As such an idea of equal suffrage had existed in the Liberal party prior to the 20th century. The references to Mill were unique in that regard that they were the only references made to any political philosopher during the debate. This is interesting since the Labour MPs could have used references to their political thinkers who also had advocated gender equality. Instead, they used rather concrete examples of anomalies of the contemporary system for advocating equal suffrage. This was probably a purposeful tactic to show that Labour could govern with practical principles instead of ideological ones. Since there existed some fears that the Labour government would mean a radical change, lack of ideological references could be seen as a way to show that the new government was in no way revolutionary. Alternatively, it could be seen as a way to depoliticize the issue and thus gain support from the other parties what the minority government needed to pass legislation.

The debate continued with a speech made by William Bull (Conservative)¹³⁵. His speech focused mainly on a conference between the government and women societies in 1918. The conference which he spoke of was the one that agreed on a compromise of women’s suffrage, the age limit of 30 as a result of long-time negotiations according to him. Since that compromise was relatively recent and there were no demands by women since the introduction of their initial suffrage, there was no hurry for the equal franchise. As such he argued that previous governments had done binding resolution on the subject. In the case of introducing the equal suffrage, Bull argued that it should be done with a similar conference as it had been done initially rather than as a normal piece of legislation. He ended his speech by stating that 25 years of age was the ideal age for suffrage rather than 21 which was the age requirement for men then.¹³⁶

Bull’s argument that the current parliament was not legitimate to introduce legislation due to decisions made by previous governments is interesting since it conflicts the idea of parliamentary sovereignty. Since one of the most important aspects of

¹³⁵ William Bull was a Conservative MP for Hammersmith during 1900-1918 and for Hammersmith South during 1918-1929. He was a solicitor before his political career.

¹³⁶ Hoc Hansard, 29.2.1924, cc 897-900.

parliamentary sovereignty is the idea that a parliament cannot bind the next parliaments. This is especially true in the British case where legislation does not make the usual distinction between constitutional and normal laws. The peculiarity of the British constitution is partly caused due to it being mostly unwritten, many British parliamentary procedures had developed over time without specific legislation. Certain documents and laws are usually referred to as constitutional laws, for example, the Bill of Rights and Magna Carta. These are more of an outline of political procedure rather than an elaborate written constitution, however. As such Bull's idea of binding following parliaments was a unique departure from the norm during the debate.

He was also a peculiar speaker in that regard that he argued that suffrage should be more limited than it was at the time. This was in contrast to other speakers who argued that suffrage should be expanded so it would be equal between the genders, it was on the other issues where disagreements arose. The other only speaker who held similar views in his speech was Annesley Somerville (Conservative)¹³⁷ who elaborated on the subject. Like many other Conservatives, he argued that loosening of residential requirements for suffrage would open a door for gerrymandering. Since the bill would not require ownership of an apartment in a constituency, it would make a transfer of electorate easier. This was especially problematic in that regard that elections could be decided by a relatively small number of electors moving to a new constituency.¹³⁸ For him, 25 years of age requirement was justified for both genders since at that age people had enough experience to be a responsible elector. He also made transnational references to other countries;

“I particularly draw attention, however, to the question of granting the franchise on level terms to all men and women at the age of 25. There seem to be ample reasons for such a reform and, as a matter of fact, in several European countries the franchise is not granted under the age of 25 and a person is not qualified to sit in the French *Chambre des Députés* until he is 25 years of age, showing that the French attach importance to that age. I do not

¹³⁷ Annesley Somerville was a Conservative MP for Windsor during 1922-1942. He was a schoolmaster of Eton College prior to his political career.

¹³⁸ Hoc Hansard, 29.2.1924, cc 905-906.

think it can be doubted that at 25 a man or woman has more experience of life, more sense of responsibility, and is much better qualified to exercise the franchise.”¹³⁹

Additionally, he drew comparisons to ancient Greece where citizenship was also acquired at the age of 25. Even though he acknowledged that at certain points of that period age requirement was only 21, he thought it could be justified in that regard that citizens had to serve their polis from the age of 18. As such they already had the experience needed to participate in public affairs and the lower age for citizenship could be justified.¹⁴⁰ Similar arguments that 25 years of age would be a more ideal age limit for both genders were later brought up by other Conservative MPs. These speeches focused on how people under 25 had little experience in politics and were in yet immature in many ways. As such allocating them such responsibility as that age would not produce good governments. They rejected the idea that genders would have different age requirements since they did not differ in any significant way in the terms of intelligence or responsibilities, however.¹⁴¹

These transnational references are interesting in that regard that they serve as counterpoints against transnational references made in favor of equal suffrage. Reference to the French Third Republic is odd since it was infamous for governmental instability¹⁴², this is something which a Conservative would likely not appreciate since they emphasized responsibility and stability in their political argumentation for the equal suffrage. The reference to ancient Greece is more understandable since classical education was a cornerstone for gentry until the early 20th century. As such it was not surprising that Somerville had certain adoration of the Ancient period and its’ political system. These references to France and Ancient Greece were in stark contrast with previous references to the Dominions and other European countries which were referenced more often. As such Somerville’s references were a unique transnational argument in the debate.

¹³⁹ Hoc Hansard, 29.2.1924, cc 906-907.

¹⁴⁰ Hoc Hansard, 29.2.1924, cc 908.

¹⁴¹ Hoc Hansard, 29.2.1924, cc 918-919, 936-937.

¹⁴² The Third Republic had 104 governments in the span of 70 years making an average lifespan of eight months for governments.

Somerville's speech was countered immediately afterward by Stephen Dodds (Liberal)¹⁴³ who rejected any ideas that some conferences during the previous governments could bind the contemporary parliament. He also mentioned that Britain should not remain with Hungary as the only European country with an unequal franchise; he shared this transnational reference with earlier speakers. As the main argument against different age requirements, Dodds used the fact that in other areas women could do the same things as men. They could for example work in factories, have a degree or manage money in a similar manner as men. As such it would make no sense for treating women differently in the case of politics. This was especially egregious in the case of political offices; women could become a member of committees but could not vote in a general election before turning 30.¹⁴⁴ In the case of rolling back age requirements for franchise Dodds said that such a proposal would not find support from the house since all of the parties had agreed that direction for the franchise was going forward, in this case lowering them. He ended his speech by making a citation to Gladstone¹⁴⁵ who had lowered advocated enlarging franchise with ungrudging hand in order to win sympathies of new electors instead of withholding it.¹⁴⁶

Dodds' speech was followed by several speeches made by Conservative MPs who held differing views on women's suffrage and how to adapt to it. For Samuel Roberts (Conservative)¹⁴⁷ the best way to ensure a stable government was to introduce a proportional electoral system alongside equal suffrage. He claimed that 100 000 electors could decide who governs the country in the first-past-the-post system (FPTP). Since the bill would enlarge electorate by five million electors, the best way to ensure that unenlightened new electors would not risk the stability of the country was to introduce a system that would not as vulnerable for small electoral swings. He

¹⁴³ Stephen Dodds was a Liberal MP for Wirral during 1923-1924. He was a lawyer in a professional career.

¹⁴⁴ Hoc Hansard, 29.2.1924, cc 909-912.

¹⁴⁵ William Gladstone was a longtime Liberal statesman during the 19th century. He most notably served as prime minister during 1868-1874, 1880-1885, 1886 and 1892-1892. His many achievements include a dedication to free-trade, enlargement of franchise and improvements to the Irish situation.

¹⁴⁶ Hoc Hansard, 29.2.1924, cc 914-915.

¹⁴⁷ Samuel Roberts was a Conservative MP for Hereford during 1921-1929 and for Sheffield Ecclesall during 1929-1935. He was a solicitor before his political career.

saw a proportional system as such and claimed that including it into the bill would guarantee his support.¹⁴⁸

The agenda of introducing proportional system has been and continues to be a contentious subject in British politics. There was, for example, a referendum about adopting Alternative vote system in 2011. In this referendum traditional political positions regarding the subject were; Conservatives supported retaining FPTP-system while Liberal Democrats and Labour supported adapting more proportional systems. The main argument today for FPTP is that it prevents hung parliaments and produces governments with strong majorities. Opponents of that system argue that the FPTP is undemocratic since it allows a party to win a majority with a relatively low percentage of votes and it creates many uncompetitive constituencies where opposing candidates have no real chance of winning. Since Conservatives have been longtime supporters of FPTP, Robert's speech is an interesting peculiarity. Aside from his own argumentation that a proportional system would be a more stable system his endorsement of the new system could be explained by the political situation at the time. Since all of the three parties were relatively equal in the terms of electoral success at the general election of 1923, he probably thought that the proportional system would be safest for his party in a case of an electoral wipeout. It can also be argued that FPTP would not always produce majorities as was the case in the previous election, as such an argument of stability for that system could easily be challenged. Since he could not know at the time that the situation of three major parties would not last, this is a safe assumption. In a system with only two major parties in FPTP, there is no real risk for major parties to lose their position or hung parliaments to be elected. If a two-party system would have been already present in 1924, Roberts would have likely not supported proportional representation.

Robert Chadwick (Conservative)¹⁴⁹ continued the debate by rejecting ideas of increasing the age limits and changing the electoral system as a way to adapt to the equal franchise. For him, the question of the equal franchise was a question of citizenship rather than a question of producing good governments. If a system was

¹⁴⁸ Hoc Hansard, 29.2.1924, cc 916-917.

¹⁴⁹ Robert Chadwick was a Conservative MP for Barrow-in-Furness during 1918-1922 and for Wallasey during 1922-1931. He was also a head of shipping company.

bad, it was no good justification to fix it by applying injustices in the ways of the unequal franchise. He also rejected an argument of Socialist vote becoming stronger in lower age requirements which he had heard in earlier debates. Even if that was the case, Chadwick argued he would turn the bias around by the ways of political argumentation and pointing flaws of Socialist doctrine. As such he was supportive of the main idea around the bill unlike some of his colleagues.¹⁵⁰

The final two Liberal speakers during the debate defended the bill. Geoffrey Howard (Liberal)¹⁵¹ focused on rejecting claims that women were politically more inactive voters than men. He pointed out that turnout in previous elections only differed by two to three percent between genders; as such any arguments that tried to differentiate the two genders were baseless according to him. He ended his speech by rejecting amendments which tried to alter the residency clause of the bill since he saw them ruining the main idea of the bill.¹⁵² Rejection of alteration of the residency clause was shared by Henry Maden (Liberal)¹⁵³ who argued that it was a major problem. Since the number of revisions made to women's right to vote was a significant following change in their status, assimilation of women suffrage into the men's was urgent business. Since men did not have such worries of losing their vote, it made no sense to keep this problematic aspect of the old law.¹⁵⁴

Overall, the majority of speakers were in favor of granting equal suffrage to women. Only other details of the bill, such as residency requirements and the question of the local franchise, were disputed. The Liberals were surprisingly supportive of the bill; their speakers mostly argued for the main idea of the bill and directed their speeches against Conservatives. The Conservative speakers were mostly critical toward the bill as a result of acting as the main opposition force toward the Labour government. Their criticism can be divided into four categories; opposition against additional amendments, rejecting demands for the bill, politicization of the issue and adoption of the equal franchise by rolling back age requirements. Even then the bill had from the

¹⁵⁰ Hoc Hansard, 29.2.1924, cc 923-924.

¹⁵¹ Geoffrey Howard was a Liberal MP for Eskdale during 1906-1910, for Westbury during 1911-1918 and for Luton during 1923-1924.

¹⁵² Hoc Hansard, 29.2.1924, cc 924.

¹⁵³ Henry Maden was a Liberal MP for Lonsdale during 1923-1924. He was a barrister prior to his political career.

¹⁵⁴ Hoc Hansard, 29.2.1924, cc 932.

Conservatives; this tells that there existed consensus in the house regarding the women's suffrage.

4.2 Women's suffrage debate in France

In the spring of 1925, the National Assembly debated about a bill that tried to introduce suffrage for women in municipal elections. The first elections in which women would vote would have been in May of the same year. This bill did not become a law due to its rejection in the Senate and as such women did not receive their franchise. As such the bill ended as one of many failed attempts to introduce women suffrage during the interwar era.

The debate of the bill began in 31.3.1925 in the National Assembly. François Vermare (Radical)¹⁵⁵ began the debate by quoting Concordet who had advocated women's suffrage already during the French revolution. In his quote Concordet argued that any ideas of true equality would be meaningless if half of the human race would be without rights, in this case, women. As such all human beings should either have equal rights or no rights at all. He continued making quotations by making a citation to John Stuart Mill who had famously supported women's suffrage in his "Subjection of women". Vermare quoted that essay in order to argue that lack of women's rights was one of the last vestiges of the old society. After these quotations, he further argued that women would contribute greatly to society if their political participation would be accepted. These benefits of women included education, hygiene, and social care. He specifically pointed out that where women's suffrage was already implemented, alcoholism has been greatly reduced. He ended his speech by pointing out that women's aims to achieve suffrage were clear and could not be delayed any longer. Vermare specifically mentioned that arguments that advocated delays until clerical influence had waned or the situation had become more stable would be no longer legitimate. Mentions of responsibilities of women in obeying laws and paying taxes without having no way to influence them were also mentioned by him as an

¹⁵⁵ François Vermare was a Radical deputy of Rhône-et-Loire during 1924-1928. He was a son of a silk weaver and a teacher by professional background.

anomaly for the contemporary system. As such time to adapt women's suffrage was right for him.¹⁵⁶

Vermare's speech was interesting in that regard that he linked himself to the republican and liberal tradition by making quotations to Concordet and Mill. Since both of these figures had been influential in early feminism, it was natural that they had been mentioned during a debate about the subject. His other main argument was that women's participation in politics would bring concrete improvements in many areas and as such would be uncontested betterment of society. His mentions of arguments against women's suffrage on the grounds of clerical influence could be seen as an attack against those who linked the issue to laicism. Likely in the previous debates some deputies had argued that women were under the influence of clergy who would direct their political life. These arguments were denied by him Vermare likely because he thought that education and state affairs had been separated from each other for long enough, in this case, multiple decades ago. This time was enough for him to argue that such arguments were not holding much truth anymore.

His speech was followed by Emile Borel (Radical)¹⁵⁷ who advocated a more cautious approach with the suffrage. He regarded the work done in municipal councils as inherently political and as such requiring political experience. Since he believed that most of the women did not want a vote, it was too early to grant it to them. Furthermore, Borel cited electoral data of a few German cities during his speech in order to show how women behaved electorally compared to men. In his data about Cologne and Spandau, dominantly catholic city and dominantly protestant borough in Berlin, women tended to vote more for Catholic Centre party in Cologne and for nationalist in Spandau. For this reason, he questioned the argument that women would vote similarly to men and wanted other deputies to consider possible effects of the women's suffrage. He specifically questioned that women would be more inclined toward peace than men as a result of their aforementioned electoral behavior. Borel continued on this fact by mentioning possible problems regarding clerical influence on women. For him women were less experienced than men in regards to politics and as

¹⁵⁶ JORF, 31.3.1925, pp. 1949-1951.

¹⁵⁷ Emile Borel was a Radical deputy for Aveyron during 1924-1936. He was an acclaimed mathematician by his professional background.

such more susceptible to political rhetoric. As such women required more civic education in order to exercise the vote in a responsible manner and keep political issues separate from clerical ones. He also recognized that suffrage could not be introduced to only women with university education like Marie Curie since it would violate the principle of universal suffrage. As a result, he proposed his own solution for introducing suffrage for women; women's suffrage would be introduced to women of over 25 years of age but only for those who had born during the 20th century. Borel proposed this limitation because he believed that old people would not be able to learn enough political information and because he wanted to limit the number of new voters in order to avoid the fall of the Second Republic in 1848. During the Second Republic the republican constitution was exploited by Louis Bonaparte who was able to get him elected into President and become emperor due to inexperienced voters. Overall Borel wanted to limit women's suffrage for those who have received largely civic education and were born after the decline of clerical influence.¹⁵⁸

Borel's speech was notable in that regard that it related the issue of women's suffrage with the issue of secularism. Since his party was renowned for their strong support of laicism, it made sense for him to use it as a part of his argumentation. His claims, that there has not been enough time for women to attain secular civic education, is notable since secular education had been established for many decades prior to the debate, in 1882 to be exact when Jules Ferry laws were passed. As such there had been over forty years of secular public education and multiple generations when the issue of women's suffrage was on the table. As such Borel had rather high standards for secular political education which would prevent clerical influence from resurfacing. In the case of his point about avoiding enlarging electorate too much is interesting in the case of the French Third Republic. Unlike Britain where suffrage was expanded gradually during the 19th and 20th centuries, in France suffrage remained roughly the same during each political regime. This was also the case with the Third Republic which had universal male suffrage but never introduced women's suffrage in any form. As such fears what such expansion of suffrage would bring instability or even give a chance for reactionaries to gain power and subvert the republican system like

¹⁵⁸ JORF, 31.3.1925, pp. 1952-1957.

Louis Bonaparte had were not totally unfounded. For these reasons, his caution can be understood.

Louis Marin (FR)¹⁵⁹ continued the debate by defending universal women's suffrage. For him the question of women's suffrage had only two options, to either give the franchise to all women or not give it at all. This was due to his perception that suffrage was a universal right which could not be denied based on one's education. Furthermore, the casualties of the Great War had left many women without their husbands to take care of them. As such Marin argued that women had to take care of themselves more in the future since they had no men to look after them. Fittingly, giving them a right to vote in municipal elections would have been recognition of their more independent status. There women would have improved the work of councils since they had expertise in many social issues. He ended his speech by arguing that France could be capable of introducing women's suffrage on a short timeframe of the bill since many other countries had been able to achieve such a feat. As an example he mentioned multiple countries; the USA which introduced the women's suffrage a month before elections, Germany, which was in ruins in the aftermath of the war, was able to introduce it three months before elections. As the most extreme example he mentioned Poland which had very unorganized citizenship registers due to partitions but was still able to introduce women's suffrage without major issues. As such France had no excuses to have women wait for their franchise which it should grant without any hesitation as a forerunner of republican governance.¹⁶⁰

This speech act was notable in that regard that it reflected France's situation following the WWI. Marin recognized that there was no return to Belle Époque and as such France had to move forward into a new age. Interestingly he gave Germany a lot of credit for their implementation of women's suffrage despite the fact it would seem unlikely for French deputies to give credit for their former enemies in the war so shortly with Ruhr crisis ongoing. A likely explanation for this positive reference is that the Weimar Republic was seen as a new beginning for Germany without its'

¹⁵⁹ Louis Marin was a FR deputy of Meurthe-et-Moselle during 1905-1940 and 1945-1951. He was leader of FR during 1925-1940. Prior to his political career he was involved with anthropological research.

¹⁶⁰ JORF, 31.3.1925, pp. 1958-1963.

imperial system that was perceived as a major cause of international tensions. Other transnational references were likely made to showcase that peripheral nations could adopt women's suffrage with minimal difficulties. Since France was perceived by Marin as the model for other democracies, he wanted to make reforms that would guarantee its' position as such.

The debate was continued a few days later in a session held in 2.4.1925. The first speech was made by Henri Maupoil¹⁶¹ (Radical) who expressed skepticism toward women's suffrage on the basis of religion;

“Or, une énorme quantité de femmes françaises, sinon la majorité, ont la foi catholique et nul ne saurait es en renier..... Jusqu'ici, dans un trop grand nombre d'églises on leur a prêché cette opinion pour qu'elles l'apportent ensuite à leur mari, à leurs enfants. Le jour où les femmes auront le bulletin de vote, l'église risque d'être transformée en club et la chaire en tribune.... C'est bien pour cela que les pays catholiques ont très énergiquement refuse aux femmes soit l'électorat, soit l'éligibilité.

Si la femme avait le bulletin de vote en main, certains départements français de toute une région n'auront peut-être plus un seul député républicain.”¹⁶²

He furthermore pointed out that women did not express clear desires to vote outside of Paris, as such Maupoil rejected the idea that there was universal demand for the women's suffrage. The timetable for introducing women's suffrage in municipal elections was too hasty in his regard and he warned the Chamber of previously mentioned dangers of expanding suffrage too rapidly with references to 1848. Maupoil made remarks on how other Latin countries (Italy, Spain, and Switzerland) had been wise to not introduce women's suffrage yet. He did not deny that women were not able to exercise the vote, however. He repeated in the argument that women

¹⁶¹ Henri Maupoil was a Radical deputy of Saône-et-Loire during 1924-1936 and a senator during 1936-1944 and 1948-1958. Prior to his political career he was a winegrower.

¹⁶² JORF 2.4.1925, pp. 2051. Translation “Nowadays significant amount, if not the majority, of women are practicing Catholics without any way to deny it... Thus far in too many churches preach opinions to them so that they can share them with their husbands and children. When women had their ballot, church is on risk on transforming into a club and pulpit into a tribune.... For this reason catholic countries have been ardent on their refusals to grant women a vote. If women had a ballot on their hands, some departments may no longer have a single republican deputy”.

could help in fighting against social issues if they could participate in political life, the moment was not just right for such large scale reform yet.¹⁶³ Maurice-Henri Escoulet¹⁶⁴ (Radical) continued on similar arguments that women had their primary role in a home rather than on political life. Like Maupoil, he also saw the bill as too hasty in introducing women's suffrage and wanted to prepare them more before granting it to them.¹⁶⁵

These argumentations show that secularism still was the main point for Radicals long after the separation of Church and state. Maupoil's speech still was notable in that regard that he openly accused the Catholic Church of influencing political conceptions of women. His conceptions could be based on the fact that the Pope had been openly monarchist or anti-republican for many decades prior to the debate. Pope Pius XI, in fact, did denounce *Action Française*, the most important monarchist organization, only in 1926 due to its' radicalization¹⁶⁶. Since women had more limited arenas to act outside of home aside from church, he probably felt that they were less critical of the church.

Pierre Etienne Flandin¹⁶⁷ (ARD) continued the debate after these skeptical speeches made by Radical deputies. In his speech, he rejected ideas that women would need more time to prepare for their suffrage. Additionally, he mentioned that the Chamber had debated and prepared to introduce women's suffrage during the last legislative session. During those debates there had existed a strong majority for the women's suffrage and as such there existed a strong mandate to act upon it. For this preliminary legislative work the suffrage could be introduced without major problems during the short timeframe of the bill. He ended his speech by metaphorically referring to women being exposed to the same dangers as men without having the same weapons as men. By this, he meant that women were expected to follow the same laws as men without

¹⁶³ JORF 2.4.1925, pp. 2049-2052.

¹⁶⁴ Maurice-Henri Escoulet was a Radical deputy of Drôme during 1924-1928. He had his professional career in agriculture.

¹⁶⁵ JORF 2.4.1925, pp. 2053-2054.

¹⁶⁶ Vaarakallio (2004), 105.

¹⁶⁷ Pierre Etienne Flandin was a ARD deputy of Yonne during 1914-1942. He was the leader of ARD during 1933-1940 and held multiple ministerial positions during the interwar period, most notably as a prime minister for a short while during 1934-1935.

being able to contribute to them.¹⁶⁸ Later in the debate Marcel Héraud¹⁶⁹ (ARD) held similar arguments for women's suffrage; women were expected to act more independently and as such their rights should be brought on the same level as men. Furthermore, he claimed that there existed no good arguments for not giving women political rights, even opponents of the bill did not deny equality between men and women. As such he urged the Chamber to make haste with the bill since deputies were in consensus regarding the issue.¹⁷⁰

These mentions of the legislative work made in the previous legislation were likely made to showcase that ARD and other members of Bloc National. Since they had been previously forwarded the issue, it made sense to emphasize that they were supporting it during the long-term instead of short-term basis. It also can be seen as an emphasis on his previous parliamentary career. As such portraying his own efforts in preparing women's suffrage being sufficient furthermore was an appraisal for him. Since preliminary work had been done so well, the bill could be passed quickly. As a whole Flandin's speech can be seen as an appraisal for efforts of Bloc National regarding the issue.

Jean-Louis Garchery¹⁷¹ (Communist) made a short speech in response to Radical's speeches. He quoted official Radical publication which had advocated the adoption of women's suffrage. This was in stark contrast with speeches held earlier by them during the debate. Especially their points of possible party advantage were seen as straying from this good principle. Garchery emphasized that he and his party were supporting women's suffrage wholeheartedly without thinking about political advantages. As such they had full confidence in women and their liberation, according to Garchery women would reach men's level of political competence quickly and then contribute to the liberation of the proletariat.¹⁷²

Garchery's speech contained rather typical conceptions and vocabulary for a communist; for him, a bourgeois party was only considering political advantage

¹⁶⁸ JORF, 2.4.1925, pp. 2054-2055.

¹⁶⁹ Marcel Héraud was a ARD deputy of Seine during 1924-1942. He was a lawyer prior to his political career.

¹⁷⁰ JORF, 2.4.1925, pp. 2056-2057.

¹⁷¹ Jean-Louis Garchery was a Communist deputy of Seine during 1924-1928 and 1932-1942.

¹⁷² JORF, 2.4.1925, pp. 2055-2056.

instead of other aspects. He also portrayed himself and his party as a straightforward party of women's liberation which did not try to politick over the issue. His portrayal of women being capable of gaining political knowledge when given chance to vote was unique since it followed speeches that demanded a gradual approach.

On the final day of the debate in 7.4.1925 many deputies who had participated in the debate before repeated their arguments. This included Borel who wanted to introduce women's suffrage by gradual reform in his proposed amendment.¹⁷³ Aimé Berthod¹⁷⁴ (Radical) held his speech in this day by warning the Chamber that women should not be granted suffrage in cantonal elections alongside municipal one. This was due to the fact cantonal elections were deemed by him as more political since cantons had a vote in senatorial elections. Since the last bill concerning women's suffrage was killed in Senate, Berthod was skeptical toward them since they could again block the bill. Due to the bill's possible effects on the composition of the Senate, he claimed that it would be safer to limit the bill for municipal elections only since they would not affect the Senate.¹⁷⁵

Berthod's speech is interesting in that regard that he considered passage of the bill through the Senate. Since a similar bill was blocked by the Senate during the previous legislative period, it made sense for him to consider such a thing happening again. His opinion that the Senate would not accept any bills that would affect its' composition is interesting in that regard that it shows his distaste for the upper chamber. His position on the issue is made more peculiar by the fact that Senate held a Radical majority during the interwar period, this puts him against his own party by not trusting senators voting for the principle of women's suffrage. Instead, he perceived them considering the bill for its effect on senatorial elections.

Adolphe Pinard¹⁷⁶ (Radical) continued the debate by defending the universal right of women to vote in the same elections as men. As such it made no sense for him to treat the two genders differently in political life. Instead, he saw illiteracy as a problem in

¹⁷³ JORF, 7.4.1925, pp. 2100.

¹⁷⁴ Aimé Berthod was a Radical deputy of Jura during 1911-1935 and a Senator during 1935-1941. He was a lawyer before his political career.

¹⁷⁵ JORF, 7.4.1925, pp. 2102-2104.

¹⁷⁶ Adolphe Pinard was a Radical deputy of Seine during 1919-1928. He was a doctor prior to his political career.

universal suffrage since it would allow people with lacking education to influence politics. This would possibly have unfortunate implications on politics since suffrage would not be valued as much if there were some requirements according to him. As such Pinard proposed requirement of school attendance for suffrage since it would bring more value to vote. Since he deemed a lack of education affecting both men and women, he demanded this requirement for both genders.¹⁷⁷ This speech followed speeches held earlier which claimed that women lacked civic education required to exercise a vote. Unlike them Pinard's speech tackled the issue on a larger scale, lacking education was seen by him as a problem concerning both genders instead of just women. Interestingly he was the only one speaker who had argued for limitations for men's suffrage whereas other speakers ignored that men were not required to have any kind of education in order to vote.

One of the last speakers of the debate was Pierre Tremintin¹⁷⁸ (Democrat) who defended universal suffrage of women. According to him the injustice of having no right to vote had lasted for too long and the bill was one step toward removing this injustice. This one step would not remain without following up on the principle of introducing suffrage for all women as he demanded the government for following up on that principle. Additionally, he repeated often made the argument of women being able to improve social conditions such as hygiene.¹⁷⁹

Interestingly deputies of SFIO did not hold any speeches during the debate. This can be explained by the relatively short timetable of the bill; the suffrage would have been introduced within a month. Since preparing electoral lists and other campaign activities require a lot of time, there was not much time to debate if the bill was to be passed. As such SFIO deputies likely did not want to prolong the debate since it would damage the intention of the bill. Additionally, they likely knew that the bill had a clear majority in the Chamber since a similar bill was passed on a clear majority during the last legislative session.

¹⁷⁷ JORF, 7.4.1925, pp. 2107-2108.

¹⁷⁸ Pierre Tremintin was a Democratic deputy of Finistère during 1924-1942. He was a lawyer by profession. Popular Democratic party was a minor Christian democratic during the Third Republic.

¹⁷⁹ JORF, 7.4.1925, pp. 2110.

4.3 Comparison of British and French liberal parties regarding the women's suffrage

The debates about women's suffrage in Britain and France during 1924-1925 had many similarities and differences. Since women's suffrage was on a different stage in the countries, the debates had different historical contexts. This manifested itself in the form of the general tone of the debates, since women had already become MPs in Britain there existed virtually no denial of women being able to participate in politics. This was clearly in contrast with the French debate which had more skeptical tones toward women becoming politically active citizens.

Political positions of the liberal parties during the debates differed significantly in the two countries. While in both countries none of the speakers outright claimed that women should not have suffrage, skepticism about it existed in both countries. In Britain minority of the Conservatives had caution toward enlarging electorate so soon after the last reform. The Liberal MPs were unanimously in support of the reform alongside the Labour; as such the two parties found themselves a common ground against the Conservatives. The positions in France were totally different; skeptical attitudes toward women's suffrage were uttered by many Radical deputies even though some of them supported it warmly. In this, they found themselves mostly alone since both communist and right-wing deputies supported the introduction of women's suffrage. This puts Liberals and Radicals on the different sides of their political debates; the Liberal Party being very supportive of women's suffrage whereas the Radical party was split on the issue.

Why liberal parties had such different positions on the issue? Perhaps the most likely explanation for this divergence can be the fact that Radicals had a majority in Senate. Since the introduction of women's suffrage at the local level would have possible effects upon the Senate's composition, Radicals likely did not want to risk compromising their dominance. The Liberal Party, on the other hand, did not have such majorities in the upper house to worry about since its members were appointed by the monarch (de jure, de facto by the government). Alternatively, Radicals wanted to avoid possible political instability which could be caused by enlarging franchises significantly. This could be especially true since France was devastated by the war and

as such needed some time to recover before passing such reforms. The other likely reason why Radicals were more cautious toward women's suffrage was that no women participated in the debate unlike in Britain. This, in turn, allowed more critical views toward women to be uttered since they did not risk disrespecting them directly.

In terms of perceptions about the possible political tendencies of women, the liberals had very different conceptions. In Britain, Liberals did not see that women's suffrage benefited any party particularly. As such, they did not see an extension of the suffrage problematic in any way. On the other hand, there existed an idea of women favoring clerical politicians among Radical deputies. This conception was repeated multiple times by them during the debate although more optimistic speeches were also held by them. Especially interesting was a conception that in protestant areas of Germany clerical parties did not enjoy significant support from women but in catholic areas clerical parties had notable support from women. Since France was a catholic country, women's suffrage would require a more cautious approach unless jeopardizing the republican constitution was a goal.

In Britain, religious arguments were absent in the debate. This could be attributed to the fact that the relationship between state and religion did play the same dominant role as it did in France during the time period. While Britain had its' share of religious debate (emancipation of Catholics for example) during the century preceding the debates, those were more focused on religious plurality than on secularism. Separation of the Church of England and state has not been on the agenda of major British parties and as such their relationship has remained cordial. This is in huge contrast with France which had implemented strict separation. Likely reason why religion did not play a role in the British debate was due to national characteristics' of Church of England and other protestant denominations. Since the Church of England and other protestant churches were under British governance instead of a foreign ruler like the Catholic Church, they did not represent competing for political forces as they did in France.

Additionally, French Radicals linked women's suffrage into the debate about political regimes. Mentions were made by them about how certain constituencies would no longer elect republican deputies if women were given the vote. This was likely

influenced by the Radical party's devotion to republicanism which was opposed to authoritarian and monarchist regimes. Women's suffrage in Britain did not generate debate about political regimes or its potential to cause changes in it. This is likely because constitutional monarchy with parliamentary supremacy had become uncontested without significant threats to it. Since republicanism or other alternatives were not advocated by major British political forces during the preceding decades, the issue of the political regime was not significant like in France which had experienced numerous changes in regimes.

Historical references differed significantly between liberal MPs and deputies. British speakers used positive references when defending women's equality. This included references to some female authors and rulers who had become acclaimed figures during their young age. As such, they used them as proof that women could do the same things as men at the same age. On the other hand, Radicals mainly used historical references against the introduction of women's suffrage. The main points of references were made by them to failed enlargements of previous regimes. These were made to show that giving a vote for millions of women would be a step into oblivion. Interestingly Radical deputies did not make references to any notable women historical like Jean D'Arc who had led armies at the age of 20 or French queens. This is likely because their republican mentality prevented them from referencing Ancien Régime figures positively. Unlike in British debates, the few references made to contemporary women who had become notable in their fields. These were conceived by Radical deputies as an exception to a rule and as such could not be used to justify women's suffrage. John Stuart Mill was referenced by Liberals and Radicals in their respective debates. This further showcases that the two parties shared ideological roots.

Transnational references about women's suffrage in other countries were also made by liberals during the debates. Curiously they both referenced those countries which had fallen behind in the terms of women's suffrage; in Britain, Liberals referenced Hungary whereas French Radicals made mentions of other Romance countries. The context of these transnational references differed significantly, however. Hungary was seen by British Liberals as a country which Britain should not associate itself in the

terms of women's suffrage. French Radicals saw their Latin neighbors as a good example which to follow instead of them lagging behind. Reasons for these specific countries can be explained for their similar status regarding the issue; both Britain and Hungary were among the few countries which had different age limit for women whereas Latin countries all remained skeptical about introducing women's suffrage.

Overall the issue of women's suffrage was perceived differently among the two liberal parties. While Liberal MPs saw equal suffrage between men and women in all elections as a desirable goal, French Radicals, on the other hand, were skeptical or divided about introducing it even on a local level.

5. Conclusions

In this thesis, we have analyzed attitudes of British and French liberal parties regarding their conceptions about socialism, trade unions and women's suffrage in parliamentary debates during 1924-1925. The position of the parties in these debates was also point of study since it showcased interesting differences in their conceptions and utterings. Methods of conceptual and comparative history were utilized in this study to these debates in order to uncover differences and similarities between attitudes of the British Liberal Party and the French Radical Party.

Since the two countries were in a different stage regarding trade unions and women's suffrage during the 1920s, it was challenging to find debates which were comparable between each other. As such the debates analyzed in this thesis were not the most ideal for comparison in all aspects. Since they shared a close timeframe, the general context was similar. This made it easier to compare the debates than trying to compare the countries when they achieved a certain level in the issues. For example, analyzing debates about Representation of Peoples act 1918 and French law of 1944 would cause problems since they happened in very different historical contexts. Despite the two countries sharing similar political backgrounds of being western liberal democracies, general conceptions regarding both issues differed significantly.

Even though the bills debated in Britain and France were different in 1924 regarding the trade unions, they shared enough elements for analyzing conceptions of liberal deputies and MPs. In Britain, Liberals saw trade unions and their goals mostly in

sympathetic light since they saw them as general interest societies. As such, they were seen free to use funds they had collected as they wished since other kinds of societies were free to do as well. For this reason, their political actions were not seen illegitimate by the Liberals unlike their opponents in the debate. In France trade unions' strikes were seen as unacceptable in normal conditions by Radicals. On the other hand, they were sympathetic toward the strikers since they had been showcased bravely during the war and had been denied recognition of their efforts when the war ended. As such, they saw the government's responsibility to listen to trade unions and workers in order to keep their standards of living acceptable instead of risking instability on the railways. Overall both of the two parties shared their sympathetic attitude toward trade unions even though they differed how big their role was meant to be.

Connections between socialism and trade unions were seen differently by British and French liberals. In Britain trade unions were seen as advocates of socialism and linked closely to the Labour party. This link was criticized by Liberals since they saw that the first Labour government did not really push its' ideological agenda. For this reason, they thought that this failure to deliver end results defeated the purpose of gathering funds for political action. In France, no links between trade unions and socialism were established by Radicals. Most likely explanations for this lack of connections is that Radicals associated themselves more closely with the left than Liberals and their more organized governmental cooperation with them. Additionally, French trade unions were more diverse in nature than in Britain, for example, Catholic unions played an important role alongside socialist ones. As such socialism as a concept did not play an important role in French debates like it did in British ones.

Whereas attitudes and positions taken by the Liberals and the Radicals were in broad strokes more similar than different, women's suffrage was seen differently by the two parties. In Britain, the Liberal party and its' MPs were in overwhelming support of equal women's support. This is explained by their ideological father's support for women's suffrage and the fact that women's suffrage had already been in effect for six years albeit unequal. Additionally, the fact that women were present in the debate served as an argument for them to support equal suffrage. As such, they belonged to a

supportive part of the House alongside the Labour against minor opposition from the Conservatives who also were generally for the equal suffrage.

In France, the debate proceeded differently than in Britain where there existed consensus regarding women's suffrage. While there existed some support for women's suffrage among the Radicals due to their ideological roots, multiple Radicals argued against equal women's suffrage during the debate. Their main issue toward women's suffrage was their conception that women tended to favor political Catholic parties. Since Radicals associated political Catholicism with anti-republican policies, many of them did express feelings that women had not received enough secular education to be ready for voting. Additionally, they saw that the situation was not stable enough to enlarge the franchise significantly in order to prevent the situation of 1848, the rise of Louis Bonaparte into power, happening again. As such many Radical deputies expressed skepticism about equal suffrage; this was something British Liberals lacked during the debate. Background of these skeptical conceptions toward women's suffrage can be explained by the lack of women during the debate and Radical's commitment toward the republican regime. Also, their anticlericalism which played a significant part in the party's identity during the previous decades explains their frequent usage of conceptions regarding the Catholic Church.

Transnational references made by the liberals differed significantly during the debates. Whereas transnational references were not made by the liberals during debates regarding trade unions, in the debates about women's suffrage they were common. While deputies and MPs of both parties made references to countries that were lagging behind in the terms of women's suffrage, they were used differently. Whereas British Liberals used them as a warning example of what Britain should not become, in France references to them were used to show their wisdom in advancing carefully by the Radicals. These transnational references are closely related to their general positions in the debates; British Liberals were supportive of equal suffrage and as such utilized references to countries that were regarded lagging behind as an undesirable group for Britain to belong to. In France, Radicals were not supportive of women's suffrage and as such made references to other countries in order to showcase that France was not alone in its' lack of women's suffrage.

Overall my analysis was able to analyze the parliamentary debates in a meaningful way and utilize them for comparative history. Although debates during the timeframe allowed some comparisons to be made, their context differed significantly from each other. As such debates for comparison could have been chosen differently in order to allow more comparative analysis. For example, debates concerning Representation of People's act 1918 and Bloc National's bill to introduce women's suffrage would have been more ideal comparative units since both countries had not introduced women's suffrage prior to them. Since both countries did not have women participating in those debates in parliaments and relative newness of implementing women suffrage in other countries, they would serve as a good idea for future research.

Additionally, the evolution of conceptions regarding trade unions and women's suffrage could be studied in a longer timeframe. It would be interesting to analyze multiple debates over the course of the interwar period. For example, women's suffrage debates in Britain and France could be a base of study during 1918-1928 for Britain and during 1919-1944 for France. In this kind of research, the focus would be on analyzing how attitudes and conceptions regarding women's suffrage evolved over time. The comparative analysis then should focus on differences and similarities of the evolution of concepts over a longer time thus bringing viewpoint closer to traditional *Begriffsgeschichte*.

Alternatively one could make similar studies regarding the topic by switching countries that are to be compared. While Britain and France form a good pair for comparing parliamentary debates, their cultural and political backgrounds made debates to take significantly different turns at times. For example, the issue of religion played a huge part in France whereas in Britain it was nonexistent. As such comparing them to other countries would make a comparison of debates more dynamical. For Britain, ideal countries for comparison would its' dominions (Australia, Canada, and New Zealand) since they share both cultural similarities and similar political institutions. Choosing countries for comparison partners for France is more problematic. Since most of the catholic Latin countries like Italy and Spain had authoritarian governments during most of the interwar period, they do not allow parliamentary debates to be compared. The most ideal country would be Belgium due

to its close cultural relations and the status of being a democratic country in Western Europe. Also their similar experiences of being devastated by Germany in the Great War are also a common historical context for these countries.

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