

British newspaper coverage of Nordic women's suffrage campaigners and women politicians 1870-1914

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A Curran Fellowship was awarded to support travel, accommodation, and subsistence from Aberdeen to London for a two-week long visit to the Women's Library, which is based at the London School of Economic and Political Science.

The aim of the visit to the Library was to make use of its archives of UK women's suffrage-related periodicals and press cuttings, in order to investigate British newspaper coverage of Nordic female politicians 1870 to 1914.

The visit took place during May 2023. I was able to access all of the manuscripts I had identified as of interest in my original application to the RSVP. In addition, library staff were very helpful in suggesting other sources that might be of interest, leading me to discover, for example, interesting correspondence between the Danish Women's Suffrage Organisation and Keir Hardie, and a criticism of the new fad for 'pin up girls' from Norwegian suffragists.

The material studied supported my initial hypothesis about the type of activity and person in the Nordic countries that stimulated British press interest. Press coverage of Nordic countries' suffrage campaign and campaigners tended to be framed as of interest only to women. It was used by pro-suffrage campaigners as evidence to justify giving the vote to British women – showing that Nordic women were politically engaged but that no disruption followed their emancipation. There was an interesting emphasis in much coverage on the suggestion that giving women the vote did not impact greatly on the outcome of elections. Both sides of the argument in the UK used the example of Nordic suffrage campaigners to support their discussion, with the anti-suffrage side comparing what they claimed were the more peaceful methods of Nordic women with the militant tactics of British suffragettes. Press portrayals of individual women politicians, in both mainstream and the suffrage press, were often focused on their personal lives and appearance.

In the second week of my visit I also had time to go through the archives of correspondence around the women's suffrage publication *The Common Cause* and found some excellent material relating to the editing of the publication, in particular its approach to readers' leaders.

During the summer of 2023 I presented a paper on some of the preliminary findings of the project at a conference at Tampere University, Finland, entitled 'Rewired and revamped? Media & trans/national feminisms in Europe and beyond'. My co-author

on the paper was Dr Pernilla Severson of Linnaeus University. Our paper was well received and we have since had an article based on the paper accepted by the organisers of the conference for a special edition. The deadline for this article is 29 February 2024. I am also planning an article comparing mainstream and suffrage press coverage of Nordic women campaigners, to be submitted to *Women's History Review*.

I also plan to continue to work on the materials collected during the visit to the Women's Library, particularly in relation to the correspondence related to the *Common Cause*.