

WILPF and The Clapham Film Unit present

# These Dangerous Women

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**Catherine Marshall**

**1880-1962**

By Katrina Gass and Pat Pleasance

**“women... are more likely than men to find some other way of settling international disputes than by an appeal to force”**

Catherine Elizabeth Marshall was born in 1880 in Harrow on the Hill, Middlesex, and was educated privately before attending St. Leonard's School, St Andrews for three years.

The family moved to Keswick on her father's retirement and it was here that her involvement with the suffrage movement began. She was a co-founder of the Keswick Woman's Suffrage Association, which was a branch of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS). She began to develop a flair for organisation, and in 1906 became Parliamentary Secretary of the NUWSS, where she worked alongside [Kathleen Courtney](#), the Honorary Secretary, from 1911 to 1914.

Through her involvement with the British and international suffrage movements Catherine's political views changed and she became a socialist and a pacifist. She worked towards having women's suffrage adopted as party policy by the Labour Party.

In 1914, at the outbreak of World War 1 Catherine Marshall was amongst the group who resigned from the NUWSS, and worked with Dutch, German and Belgian women on the preparations for the 1915 Hague Congress. It was her firm belief “that women... are more likely than men to find some other way of settling international disputes than by an appeal to force”. She worked to secure passports for the 180 British women wishing to attend the Congress but with other delegates was stopped from sailing when all civilian shipping was banned.

Following the Congress she was the British Committee Hon. Secretary until her work with the No-Conscription Fellowship became more demanding. This organisation had been established in November 1914 to campaign against conscription. By 1916 conscription became law, and those men who had been working for the Fellowship were imprisoned. Catherine Marshall became Hon. Secretary, and took over the direction of the work. For the rest of the war she campaigned tirelessly for the humane treatment of those



imprisoned for persisting in refusal. She faced regular police raids on the office, and risked arrest herself when she aided men to avoid being taken into custody.

After 1917 Catherine suffered from periods of ill health but remained active in the Women's International League (WIL). At the 1919 Congress, she proposed that the organisation should adopt the name Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). She then worked from 1920-21 at the WILPF headquarters in Geneva, and in 1923-24 she was appointed a WILPF envoy, visiting heads of state in France and Germany when the Ruhr was invaded, and also visiting workers there involved in non-violent resistance.

In the late 1930s she became involved in the support of Jewish refugees from Czechoslovakia, and gave some of them a home at a house in Derwentwater owned by herself and her brother.

Despite her continuing ill-health, for the rest of her life Catherine was active in the Labour Party, the Union of Democratic Control and in the United Nations Association, and maintained her interest in international affairs.

Catherine died in 1961 following a fall at her home.

