

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) How did it start in 1915?

Women campaigners from Europe and America had been meeting together under the auspices of The International Women's Suffrage Association (IWSA) since the start of the 20th Century. Most came to these international meetings as delegates from their national suffrage associations. As they worked together at the international level to exchange ideas and build campaigns for obtaining the franchise in their respective countries, they also began to discuss other issues of concern to women. And by 1910, this group formed a well-organised, vibrant international network.

The IWSA congress in Budapest in 1913 attracted 2800 participants from all over Europe and America: the international delegates numbered about 500. The author Charlotte Perkins Gilman attended the event and afterwards wrote about the new awakening of cooperation between women.

‘The most amazing thing in these great International Women's Congresses is the massing and moving of the hitherto isolated and stationary sex.’ [*Jus Suffragii* 15 July 1913, p6]

Women were united not only by the desire to gain the vote but a passionate desire to improve the situation for all women and men, but particularly the situation of exploited women.

‘It was not merely a dry discussion of ways and means to get the vote, but comprehensive studies of social and moral conditions, and of how women could better them. At almost every session one learned of the White Slave Traffic; of ways to protect young girls; of efforts of women legislators to raise the age of consent; of State insurance for mothers; of solutions of the problem of the illegitimate child; of better laws for working women; of the abolition of sweat shops and child labour.’ [*Jus Suffragii* 15 July 1913, p6]

All over Europe, women were joining together at a national level to campaign on issues that affected them. For example, in Britain, the Women's Cooperative Guild was working on several social issues alongside their claim for vote- they were actively campaigning for improvements in child health and education provision, better pay and working conditions for women and girls and divorce procedures that were fairer to women. Women wanted the vote, and they were beginning to realise that they wanted a say in the legislation that affected their lives.

Despite the optimism and work of the women, the men in political power moved toward the declaration of war in Europe in 1914. In July, the IWSA delivered an International Manifesto of Women to the Foreign Office and all the foreign Embassies in London. The signatories of the manifesto on behalf of IWSA were Millicent Garrett Fawcett, First Vice President and Chrystal Macmillan, Recording Secretary.

‘We, the women of the world, view with apprehension and dismay the present situation in Europe, which threatens to involve one continent, if not the whole world, in the disasters and the horrors of war. ...[...]. We women of twenty-six countries, having banded ourselves together in the International Women's Suffrage Alliance with the object of obtaining political means of sharing with men the power which shapes the fate of nations, appeal to you to leave untried no

method of conciliation or arbitration for arranging international differences which may help to avert deluging half the civilised world in blood.' (Jus Suffragii Vol 8 No 13 September 1914, page 1)

Shortly afterwards, on 4 August 1914, the IWSA cooperated with NUWSS to organise a mass meeting in London for women and women's organisations to protest against the war. The British organisations included the National Union of Women Workers, National Federation of Women Workers, Women's Cooperative Guild, Women's Labour League, and National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. The speakers came from France, Germany, Hungary, Finland and Switzerland as well as Britain: all condemned the seemingly unstoppable politics of war and mourned the losses that would be inflicted on women and children who had no influence on the policies that promoted the war.

The European women who met in London at the Conference on August 4 1914, called for a negotiated settlement of the conflict and condemned the senseless war-driven destruction of 'women's treasures', not pieces of canvas, the icons of art, but each woman's family and her beloved land.

One Swiss member, Mme Thoumaian criticised the message of the inevitability of war in every country of Europe, 'everyone is speaking of war as if it were a dispensation from the Almighty, something like measles, that we cannot avoid, and so must accept with patience.' Mrs. Barton of the British Women's Cooperative Guild believed it was important for suffragists to continue to campaign as 'Women have got to make their voices heard, and in a country like ours, the people should have real representation, because it is the people who have to pay the price. Women must have political power.'

But the President of the French Association, Mme Schlumberger wrote that French women could no longer support a feminist demonstration against the war even although many of them believed that women would have prevented the war honourably, if women had the suffrage in all countries. She supported French political leaders who expected French women to accept their duty to work for France, to gather in the harvest and the vintage in the absence of their men who had gone to the front.

By the end of August 1914, Aletta Jacobs wrote from Amsterdam that she could not send her suffrage report to IWSA as 'there is no Suffrage work done: our Suffragists are now all engaged in charity work and that kind of thing'. By this stage in the war many Dutch women were engaged in relief work with refugees, often with destitute women and children (including British women deported from Britain) evicted from their home because they were married to foreign men.

In Britain, Chrystal Macmillan, the recording secretary of IWSA assisted by Mary Sheepshanks, raised the money, organised provisions and, on October 13, 1914, delivered food and clothing to help the Dutch Authorities provide for 80,000 destitute Belgian refugees in Flushing. Chrystal later organized shipments of baby food and clothing for new-born infants. The UK accounts show that NUWSS raised £3423 2s 3d by the end of October 1914 for the 'Belgian Refugees in Holland'.

The Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) took a very different attitude to the outbreak of war. Despite the fact that in June 1914 Christabel Pankhurst was writing that 'warfare as developed by man has become a horror unspeakable ... a mechanical and soulless massacre of multitudes of soldiers', Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst believed that no form of international diplomacy could stop the war. The leaders of WSPU espoused the patriotic cause to such an extent that they dropped their suffrage work and travelled the country promoting the army recruitment campaign. The WSPU publication, *The Suffragette*, became devoted to war propaganda and renamed *Britannia* in October 1915.

In America there was a call for a great women's peace parade in New York on 29 August 1914 - 'there will be no music - simply muffled drums - no flags or signs, except the plain white peace flags, banded in black. The marchers are asked to wear black or white with black sleeve bands.' Carrie Chapman Catt, president of IWSA noted that women often paid the cost of war, 'with none of the inspiration which comes from crowds, from music, from appeals to patriotism, from hero worship, from love of adventure, women bear the burdens as best they might.' She noted that by the end of the Boer War, 4000 men had given their lives in the field but 20,000 women and children had died in concentration camps. As American women continued to raise funds for suffrage work, Mrs. Catt issued an appeal for peace

'If courts are better than duels, if votes are better than pitched battles to settle national difficulties, so are international courts and international parliaments better than war.'

With the onset of war in August 1914, the women of the German section of the International Women's Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) felt that they had no alternative but to cancel the International Congress which had been due to meet in Berlin in June 1915. In response, Aletta Jacobs wrote on behalf of the Dutch national committee to other national suffrage organisations in November 1914, suggesting that the Congress could be held in Holland which was a neutral country

'In these dreadful times in which so much hate has been spread among different nations, the women have to show that we at least retain our solidarity and that we are able to maintain mutual friendship'.

The following month, Chrystal Macmillan wrote to all 26 suffrage societies in the Alliance urging them to agree to meet in Holland to 'discuss the principles on which peace should be made and, if so, to act internationally'.

She made three suggestions

1. the IWSA could have its regular convention with a business meeting afterwards:
2. the IWSA could call a convention attended by different women's organisations: or
3. a conference could be summoned by individual women.

Each national suffrage committee discussed and voted on whether to hold the international meeting in Holland. The UK committee of the National Union of Women's

Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), meeting in London, voted that an international women's business congress should be organized by IWSA in 1915. This resolution was carried with only two members opposed.

One of them was the President, Millicent Fawcett who was opposed on the grounds that women are 'as subject as men to national prepossessions and susceptibilities.we should then run the risk of the scandal of a PEACE conference disturbed and perhaps broken by violent quarrels.' [Wiltsher 1985] Indeed Mrs Fawcett's view reflected the view of many suffragists: by March 1915, the international committee had voted by 11 to 6 that the IWSA would not call the conference.

It is difficult now to imagine the turmoil of emotions brought about by the declaration of war in 1914. In England Kate Courtney was writing in her diary 'This morning George Trevelyan – young George, but he looked old and worn – called. Personally he has nothing to fear, but anything more tragic than his face and manner I never saw. Everything he cares for has gone down.after some talk I said 'Don't you wish you could sleep through until the war is over?' G.T. said, passionately, in a tone I shall never forget 'I wish I could die' and he covered his face with his hands and sobbed.' [quoted in Randall 1964]

Jane Addams later wrote ' When news came to America of the opening of hostilities which were the beginning of the European Conflict, the reaction against war, as such, was almost instantaneous throughout the country ...newspaper cartoons and comments expressed astonishment that such an archaic institution should be revived in Modern Europe.' [Addams 1945]

Amidst all this emotion and horror a small group of suffragist women decided to hold true to their commitment to work internationally. As it looked increasingly unlikely that IWSA would call the conference, Chrystal Macmillan travelled to Holland in February 1915 to work with Aletta Jacobs and the Dutch women, to make arrangements for a conference to be organised by individual women for individual women.

On February 12 and 13, in Amsterdam, women from Belgium, Germany and Great Britain met with the Dutch women and drafted twelve resolutions for the conference. Despite postal disruptions due to the war, invitations were sent out to organisations and individual women, and travel and accommodation arrangements were made. The invitation to 'women of all nations' along with the preliminary three-day programme for an International Women's Congress to be held at The Hague, starting on 28 April, was published in *Jus Suffragii* on 1 March 1915.

Despite lack of support from the leaders of the suffrage movement and bitter criticism from the press, 180 British women applied for passports to attend the gathering. They did this despite the fact that travel across the North Sea and English Channel had become dangerous for all shipping. Germany had declared the seas around Great Britain to be a war zone and all enemy ships in that area were liable to submarine attack. In retaliation, Britain started to blockade all ships carrying goods for Germany and its allies: some

British merchant ships started to carry neutral flags. The German government then decreed that its submarines would claim the right to the attack all ships in these waters, even those carrying neutral flags.

The British women who wanted to attend the conference had great difficulty obtaining passports from the Government: after some lobbying by Catherine Marshall, twenty were granted. The women made their way to the port at Tilbury where they awaited the next ferry to Holland. But, much to the glee of the British press, the British Government issued a new order closing the North Sea to all shipping and the women were unable to make the crossing to Holland.

Three British women did reach the conference, Chrystal Macmillan and Kathleen Courtney, who had been working in Holland since February 1915 with the Dutch Committee in preparation for the conference, and Emmeline Pethwick-Lawrence who travelled with the contingent from USA.

Despite knowing of the dangers, the delegation of 42 American women led by Janet Addams set sail from New York on April 13th on the Noordam. They spent the time on board discussing and proposing amendments to the resolutions for the conference. When they reached the English Channel they were stopped by British warships which held them there for four days without explanation, releasing them on 27th, just in time for them to reach the Congress on the first evening.

Approximately 1200 women attended the congress from 12 countries, including representatives from both belligerent and neutral countries: Austria (6), Belgium (5), Britain (3), Canada (2), Denmark (6), Germany (28), Hungary (9), Italy (1), Netherlands (1000), Norway (12), Sweden (12), and USA (47). French and Russian women were unable to attend.

The press in Britain and America were critical of the women's efforts to continue international discussion in time of war: some encouraged their readers to laugh at the women and tried to belittle their efforts, calling them 'peacettes' and 'crankettes', terms reminiscent of previous efforts to disparage the women's campaign to gain the vote.

One thousand suffragists and suffragettes took part in the International Congress of Women at The Hague in April 1915. Although the Congress was not officially a suffrage gathering, many of these women were members of suffrage organisations who had been campaigning for years to obtain the vote for women, working together at national and international level.

The women worked through three days with a programme of debates and discussions, some in public, some in committee. Speeches were short and inspirational, delivered in English, French and German and meetings were competently chaired. Women from eleven countries worked in groups, some women acting as translators and interpreters, to overcome language barriers and different interpretations of correct committee procedure,

to reach agreement on twenty resolutions. Mary Sheepshanks, editor of *Jus Suffragii* described the dynamics of the international meeting.

'The Resolutions Committee, consisting of two representatives of each country met before, throughout and after the Congress, and considered amendments and new resolutions and drafted the programme and final arrangements of resolutions.'
Jus suffragii June 1, 1915.

Many of the resolutions from the 1915 Congress have a vibrancy that continues to resonate today. The women passed the twenty resolutions under seven headings:

1. Women and war
2. Action towards peace
3. Principles of Permanent Peace
4. International Cooperation
5. The Education of Children
6. Women and the Peace settlement Conference
7. Action to be taken.

The horror of the war which had started in August 1914 was the first item tackled by the women and led to their 'protest against the madness and the horror of war, involving as it does a reckless sacrifice of human life and the destruction of so much that humanity has laboured through centuries to build up.' They particularly noted that war has specific effects on women which led then to pass Resolution 2;

Women's Sufferings in War—This International Congress of Women opposes the assumption that women can be protected under the conditions of modern warfare. It protests vehemently against the odious wrongs of which women are the victims in time of war and especially against the horrible violation of which attends all war.

The women then went on to make proposals on how action might be undertaken to move towards peace. They steered clear of apportioning blame noting that 'the mass of the people in each of the countries now at war believe themselves to be fighting, not as aggressors but in self-defence and for their national existence: there can be no irreconcilable differences, between them, and their common ideals afford a basis upon which a magnanimous and honourable peace might be established.'

They clearly defined the actions they expected governments to undertake, avoiding prescriptions based on political assessments of the balance of power, and focusing on international justice.

The Peace Settlement The Congress urges the Governments of the world to put an end to this bloodshed, and to begin peace negotiations. It demands that the peace which follows shall be permanent and therefore based on principles of justice, including those laid down in the resolutions adopted by this Congress, namely:—

- ✓ That no territory should be transferred without the consent of the men and women in it, and that the right of conquest should not be recognised.

- ✓ That autonomy and a democratic parliament should not be refused to any people.
- ✓ That the Governments of all nations should come to an agreement to refer future international disputes to arbitration or conciliation, and to bring social, moral, and economic pressure to bear upon any country which resorts to arms.
- ✓ That foreign politics should be subject to democratic control.
- ✓ That women should be granted equal political rights with men.

The women wanted to take a full part in the peace settlement and fully supported the creation of an organisation for continuous mediation and permanent peace. They defined the principles of a permanent peace as

- ✓ **Respect for nationality** - This International Congress of Women recognising the right of the people to self-government, affirms that there should be no transference of territory without the consent of the men and women residing therein, and urges that autonomy and a democratic parliament should not be refused to any people.
- ✓ **Arbitration and Conciliation.**—This International Congress of Women, believing that war is the negation of progress and civilisation, urges the Governments of all nations to come to an agreement to refer future international disputes to arbitration and conciliation.
- ✓ **International Pressure.**—This International Congress of Women urges the Governments of all nations to come to an agreement to unite in bringing social, moral, and economic pressure to bear upon any country which resorts to arms instead of referring its case to arbitration or conciliation.
- ✓ **Democratic Control of Foreign Policy.**—Since war is commonly brought about not by the mass of the people, who do not desire it, but by groups representing particular interests, this International Congress of Women urges that Foreign Politics shall be subject to Democratic Control; and declares that it can only recognise as democratic a system which includes the equal representation of men and women.
- ✓ **The Enfranchisement of Women** — Since the combined influence of the women of all countries is one of the strongest forces for the prevention of war, and since women can only have full responsibility and effective influence when they have equal political rights with men, this International Congress of Women demands their political enfranchisement.

Many of these resolutions, passed 95 years ago, still have something to say to us today.

The women who took part in the International Congress of Women at The Hague in April, 1915 worked hard over the three day period to resolve their differences in understanding, interpretations and perspectives on war and international cooperation. The 1200 courageous women had come to the Netherlands from 12 countries, including neutral

countries and belligerent countries, despite the fact that many had already lost brothers, fiancés, husbands and sons in the first year of the war. They overcame practical obstacles to travel around war zones, and they came despite criticism by their fellow country men and women, and the ridicule of the press in their own countries.

The principles laid out in the six resolutions under 'International Cooperation' still stand as the bedrock of the activities undertaken by Women's International League for Peace and Freedom today. In 1915, the women recommended several actions to establish international organisations to resolve conflicts between nations without recourse to killing. They advocated that the Society of Nations should be developed, and this in turn would support a permanent International Court of Justice and regular meetings of a permanent International Conference, in which women could participate. This Conference would 'formulate and enforce those principles of justice equity and good will in accordance with which the struggles of subject communities could be more fully recognised and the interests and rights not only of the great Powers and small Nations but also those of weaker countries and primitive peoples gradually adjusted under enlightened international public opinion'. The women also recommended the establishment of an international body to study the principles and conditions necessary for permanent peace.

The women recommended that a Council of Conciliation be set up to settle international differences which arise from 'economic competition, expanding commerce, increasing population and changes in social and political standards'. Although the women recommended freedom of trade they were aware of power differentials; they set out their beliefs that trade routes should be open and on equal terms to shipping of all nations; and they were aware, even in 1915, of the some of the challenges to fair trading conditions

'Inasmuch as the investment of capitalists of one country in the resources of another and the claims arising therefrom are a fertile source of international complication, this International Congress of Women urges the widest possible acceptance of the principle that such investments shall be made at the risk of the investor, without claim to the official protection of his government'.

Resolution 13b Report of International Congress of Women, The Hague 1915.

As they studied the international political situation, the women were appalled to find that diplomats were trained to act solely in self-interest for their country and frequently participated in making international treaties which remained secret. They demanded that all future treaties should be open to the scrutiny of each country's legislature.

Supporting this radical programme was the women's declaration that it was essential to include women in all these activities so that women could share all civil and political rights and responsibilities on the same terms as men. The topic of 'Woman Suffrage and the War' was the subject of a public debate on the Thursday evening of the congress: that meeting was chaired by Chrystal Macmillan and one of the speakers was Kathleen Courtney of Great Britain who moved the resolution for women's equal political rights, saying

'we call upon all women who feel their responsibility for war in the world and are not able to make their influence effective, we call upon all these women to work as they have never worked, so that women may obtain their full political enfranchisement and make their will effective in the world'.

Report of International Congress of Women, The Hague 1915, page 81.

By the end of the International Women's Congress on 1 May 1915, approximately 2000 people had attended the meetings of the three-day event at the Hague: many were fee-paying visitors but the bulk of the 1200 women from 12 countries signed up to membership. They participated in the debates; and they passed resolutions protesting against war and proposing ways to create and strengthen institutions and systems to resolve international disputes without recourse to violence.

After passing several resolutions on international cooperation and the principles of Permanent Peace, the women focused on the long term striving toward peace and advocated a revision in the education of children. Resolution 16 'urges the necessity of so directing the education of children that their thoughts and desires may be directed towards the ideal of constructive peace'. An American delegate, Miss Holbrook said,

'Too much emphasis is given by men in the education of children to the advocacy of force and violence, and women should see that this state of things is altered, and that children are taught to admire not only their own great men but also to admire the heroes of the world and the women who sacrificed themselves to others. It is surely desirable that children should have an international outlook, and that art, music and poetry should be enlisted for the cause of peace.'

Jus Suffragii 1 June 1915, p302

In the more immediate future, the delegates made it clear that they expected women to take on an active role in national and international affairs. They proposed that the parliamentary franchise should be extended to women in all countries: and urged that women should participate in the peace settlement at the end of the war, to ensure that women's claims be included.

The women, being realists, feared that women would not be represented in the negotiations of the peace settlement. To ensure that women's voices were heard and their post-war needs addressed, they proposed that an international meeting of women would take place at the same time and in the same place as the Conference of Powers which would frame the peace settlement after the war – for the purpose of presenting practical proposals to that conference.

Nearly at the end of the conference, Rosika Schwimmer gave an impassioned speech, urging the women to do more to bring about an end to the war raging around Europe. The women had shown they could work together internationally in the face of national criticisms but could they not do more? Ms Schwimmer proposed that a delegation of women from the Congress should carry the message expressed in the resolutions to the rulers of the belligerent and neutral nations of Europe and to the president of United States. She asked that women urge all governments to put an end to the bloodshed and begin peace negotiations.

Several delegates, including Jane Addams, Chrystal Macmillan and Kathleen Courtney, expressed doubts as to whether the proposal was practicable – was it sensible to propose that a group of women travel around Europe in the midst of war? The counter argument was summed up by one delegate who said 'I hope that the resolutions passed by this

international congress, be not only words, words, words but that they may be translated into actions'. This, the last resolution of Congress was carried after a re-count.

When the International Congress of Women came to an end on 1 May 1915, almost all of the women returned to their home countries, leaving the five delegates elected by Congress to make arrangements to travel around Europe to meet with the Heads of State of all belligerent and neutral countries. The President of the Congress, Jane Addams, accompanied by Dr Aletta Jacobs and two companions, all being from neutral countries, set out to visit the political leaders in the warring nations, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Italy, France and Great Britain. Chrystal Macmillan, Emily Balch, Rosika Schwimmer and two companions set off northwards to make contact with Heads of State in the neutral and Scandinavian Countries, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Russia. And together they proposed to gain an interview with the President of United States.

These two groups of women travelled back and forward by train and boat across Europe for two months, meeting face-to-face with all the Heads of State, presenting their proposals for summoning a neutral conference for continuous mediation to bring the war to an end. They laid out the details of their proposals and invited the statesmen to respond. The women took notes of the conversations, and checked their understandings with each other and with the politician to confirm or clarify meanings. They also asked the political leaders to sign a written statement outlining initiatives that would be acceptable to them and their governments.

In all, fifteen countries were visited and the women delegates were received by 24 Ministers, two Presidents, one King and the Pope. In each country, the women worked with diplomats and civil servants to set up formal meetings with the political leaders, but they were also received by sympathetic politicians and academics, and they addressed public meetings to promote peaceful resolution of the conflict.

In Sweden the delegates attended massive peace meetings organised by women and men who wanted to encourage their government to initiate peace mediations. In Great Britain the delegates met with women setting up the branch organisations to promote the resolutions passed at the International Congress of Women, which had taken place at The Hague, only a few weeks previously in April 1915. At international level, the organisation was known as the Women's Committee for Permanent Peace but in Great Britain the organisation was known as the Women's International League (WIL).

The practicalities of travel across Europe by train and boat were seen as minor inconveniences for the deputation of women intent on changing the shape of political activity. The atmosphere in the belligerent countries, however, was not conducive to the talk of negotiated peace settlement.

One visitor to London described the scene. 'All London is placarded – the walls of buildings, billboards, even the base of Trafalgar Monument. The wind-shield of every bus and taxicab carries its complement – narrow strips with endless variations of appeals to the “young men of Britain” to enlist for “king and country”. “Britain is fighting not only for the Freedom of Europe but to defend your mothers, wives and sisters from the horrors of war”. The poster campaign is supplemented by various appeals to popular imagination – brass bands, companies of soldiers on parade, street corner speeches and mass meetings. Hardest of all is the personal appeal of the uniformed officer who stops the

factory hand or clerk on the street and questions “Are you satisfied with your work? Why don't you go to the recruiting station?” [Merriman 1915]

In Berlin there were a similar public commitment to the war 'The walls were placarded, and the windows full of appeals for money for all sorts of objects: for blinded soldiers, for the relief of widows of the heroes of a certain battle, for a woman's fund to be made up of pennies and presented to the Kaiser...' [Hamilton, 2003]

People in each country insisted that their nation had gone to war in self-defence. Each nation accused the opposing sides of signing secret treaties prior to the war and of military atrocities against civilians once war was declared. People in Germany complained that the President of USA was fuelling the war by allowing individual manufacturers to make and ship munitions to Great Britain.

Initially the envoys expected that US President Wilson would be a good person to act as mediator but they found that German leaders did not consider him to be neutral as US industrial corporations were supplying munitions to Britain. Moreover several leaders in European countries gave notice that they did not consider President Wilson suitable as they believed he knew little of European political issues or European ways of working

The women advocated that a conference should be called by the neutral nations of Europe. Initially not one of the neutral countries in Europe would agree to call a conference for fear that this would bring into question their neutrality. But the women persisted in their diplomatic work, suggesting that invitations be issued not by one country but ‘by a group of five neutrals, namely Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland.’

The envoys also procured agreement from leaders in the belligerent countries that they would not oppose the calling of such a conference even though they could not call for such a meeting themselves. The envoys acknowledged that ‘if the side in the strong position were to ask for peace, the weaker side would resent mediation because it would be thought that the stronger wanted to dictate terms; while, were the weaker side to ask for peace, it would be considered as a confession of defeat.’ Von Jagow of Germany supported this analysis in July 1915, adding that ‘at this moment neither side is strong enough to dictate terms and neither side is so weakened that it has to sue for peace’. However he said that Germany would not oppose a conference organised by Neutrals. Similarly in a letter to Chrystal Macmillan, the Foreign Office stated that Lord Crewe had set forth the British position - that the Government would not place any obstacle in the way of the formation of a League of Neutrals to prepare the ground.

The women had agreed to meet in Amsterdam in August to review their progress but without consulting her colleagues Jane Addams sailed for America. Dr Jacobs, followed by Chrystal Macmillan and Rosika Schwimmer travelled to the US, hoping for an interview with President Wilson and his backing for a conference organised by the neutral nations. Unfortunately President Wilson reserved his judgment on the proposal, privately informing his colleagues that he would only offer his support when mediation could be guaranteed success.

On October 15, 1915 in America the women envoys issued a Manifesto to the Press, giving a brief description of their findings, emphasising that they had heard ‘much the same words in Downing Street as in Wilhelmstrasse, in Vienna as in Petrograd, in Budapest as in The Havre.’ They had shown that there was room for mediation if the political leaders willed it, and concluded with an appeal for all political leaders to find a way to stop the war

‘The excruciating burden of responsibility for the hopeless continuance of this war no longer rests on the wills of the belligerent nations alone. It rests also on the wills of those neutral governments and people who have been spared its shock but cannot, if they would, absolve themselves from their full share of responsibility for the continuance of war.’

The Manifesto was welcomed by the Press who acknowledged that the calling of a neutral conference for mediation had become a matter for serious discussion by government officials, the press and public opinion in all countries concerned. Sadly, however, no action was taken by any Head of State and the war continued unabated.

Helen Kay
September 2011
Revised 10 March 2013

Appendix: Who did the envoys talk with? They held 28 separate interviews with 26 Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers, plus a King and the Pope:

Austria	Prime Minister Stuerghk and Foreign Minister Burian in Vienna:
Belgium	Foreign Minister d’Avignon in Havre:
Denmark	Prime Minister Zahle and Foreign Minister Scavenius in Copenhagen:
France	Prime Minister Viviani and Foreign Minister Delcassé in Paris:
Germany	Reichskanzler von Bethmann-Hollweg and Foreign Minister von Jagow in Berlin:
Great Britain	Prime Minister Asquith and Foreign Minister Grey in London:
Holland	Prime Minister Cort van der Linden and Foreign Minister Loudon in The Hague:

Hungary	Prime Minister Tisza in Budapest:
Italy	Prime Minister Salandra and Foreign Minister Sonnino in Rome also the Pope:
Russia	Foreign Minister Sazonoff in Petrograd:
Norway	King Haakon, Prime Minister Knudsen, Foreign Minister Ihlen, and by Messrs Loevland, Asrstad, Castberg and Jahren the four Presidents of the Storthing in Christiana:
Sweden	Foreign Minister Wallenberg in Stockholm:
Switzerland	President Motta and Foreign Minister Hoffman in Berne:
The Netherlands	Prime Minister Cort van Linden and Foreign Minister Loudon at The Hague:
USA	President Wilson and Secretary of State Lansing in Washington:

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