

Who Were The Suffragettes?

By *Alexander Baron* - Oct 13, 2015



Suffragettes march

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Last week, the London premiere of the film *Suffragette* was targeted by a group calling itself Sisters Uncut who were protesting against austerity which they claim is leading to cuts for (what they see as) essential services for female victims of domestic violence, etc. A once over of [their blog](#) should convince any rational person that they are idiots; what exactly are *self-defining women*? Nevertheless, though their invasion of the red carpet may have caused annoyance to some film-goers, and definitely did to the security staff, and while they may have committed some trivial public order offence, many people who do not share their *Weltanschauung* would regard this form of protest as legitimate. The same cannot be said for the suffragettes that eponymous film was made about, because contrary to popular belief, they were not daffy women who simply protested loudly for the right to vote, they were by any reasonable definition terrorists. You think not?

What would be the reaction if a modern terrorist group, an IRA splinter faction or an Islamist cell, were to bomb the home of Chancellor George Osborne, not simply his official residence but his actual home? There would be condemnation on both sides of the House, even from **Jeremy Corbyn**, and outrage from the public. This is what the suffragettes did in February 1913, yet the leaders of the movement, including Emmeline Pankhurst, seemed to think this was some sort of joke. It is notable that Martin Luther King never entertained anything like this, and some would say he had a more legitimate axe to grind.



Annie Kenney and Christabel Pankhurst were the members of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU)

This was not an isolated incident, a couple more examples will suffice. On January 30, 1913, Annie Kenney told a crowd at Essex Hall:

"It is the duty of every suffragette and suffragist to go on attacking every pillar-box throughout the country and break every window they can without being caught".

When she appeared before a Bow Street magistrate on April 9 that year, it was reported that 370 letter boxes had been fired by suffragettes, including six cases of arson.

On July 7, 1914, the printer of the *Suffragette* newspaper was convicted of unlawfully inciting acts of damage to property including setting fire to houses and haystacks. Contrast this with the often imaginary crimes of which *racists* have been convicted. In the 1990s, the British Nazi leader Colin Jordan was dragged into court for publishing the satire *Merrie England 2000* (which is now freely available on-line). When medical specialists agreed that the elderly Jordan was too ill to stand trial, the prosecution went ahead against his printer (who was acquitted). There have been many other similar oppressive prosecutions, against non-whites as well as whites. The suffragettes did not commit thought crimes but real crimes that had potential and even real victims.

While it is true that the lot of especially working class women was far worse then than it is today, these women had more pressing priorities than the right to vote or not vote every five years. To take just one example, in 1914, infant mortality in Ashton-under-Lyne was a staggering 184 per 1,000 live births. In 2011, there were **4.2 deaths per thousand live births** in England and Wales, the lowest ever. The suffragette movement never did anything for women's health, this was all achieved by medics and reformers in and out of government, who were predominantly male. Third wave feminists with their incessant whining about male *privilege* and contrived rape statistics would do well to remember this before they eulogise these petticoat terrorists of a bygone age.

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