Sylvia Pankhurst – Briefing Notes

Known by Audience from Presentation

* Born in Manchester 1882
* Daughter of Emmeline Pankhurst and Richard Pankhurst – active member of the ILP
* Told by her father ‘if she did not work for others she would not have been worth her upbringing’
* Became active in demanding women’s rights with Emmeline and Christabel when not allowed to use the hall built as a memorial to her father
* Active Suffragette 1903-14. Gaoled and subjected to force feeding multiple times
* Linked socialism and feminism (arguably the first to do so in Britain) and moved to live among working people in the East End offering lodging to people of all races. Denounced the war
* Disowned by her mother and sister
* Concentrated on helping the women of the East End by providing child care in an old pub: ‘The Mother’s Arms’, food in basic restaurants and work by establishing a toy factory

**Background Character Facts**

Vague, absent minded at times

Uncaring of appearance

A furious firebrand spitfire when roused to anger

Lover of Kier Hardie

Detester of marriage as implying ownership. Had child with an Italian anarchist

A dedicated communist from 1917

Met and corresponded with Lenin

Too left wing for Lenin in her rejection of all compromise with parliaments or parliamentary parties

Completely non-racist.

PTO

Ian L’s Questions

**Why did you denounce the war?**

Perhaps answer along the lines that working people are dying on both sides.

**Do you denounce violence?**

Perhaps answer along the lines of necessity in a just cause. This war is not a just cause. It is fought by the poor for the interests of the rich

**Why do you live among working people?**

Perhaps answer along the lines that working people are as good as any other people. They are honest and straight talking. Society has let them down. The wives of soldiers need practical help – not slogans.

**Do you love your country?**

Perhaps answer along the lines of ‘Not particularly. I love people but not artificial international boundaries’

**How can you support Lenin and his party? They advocate violence and bloodshed.**

Perhaps answer along the lines of ‘A means to an end’. They support complete recognition of women’s equality and help ordinary people. How can I not support them?

**Are you a patriot?**

Answer as you think she would! Refuse to answer if you wish.

Feel free to answer in any way you consider compatible with Sylvia’s views. She didn’t fit easily in boxes so don’t worry if you keep me or the audience wrong-footed.