

MALE PREROGATIVE, MEDIA, AND DIVIDED PARLIAMENT: THE FIGHT AND RESISTANCE TO RAISING OF THE AGE OF CONSENT IN ENGLAND, 1872-1885

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This paper illuminates the complex struggle by Members of Parliament, the Media, and middle-class organizations to protect young girls by raising the age of sexual consent. Intertwined with perceptions of prostitution, sexually transmitted disease, rape law, and middle-class values, the coalition met deep, staunch resistance from cultural conservatives seeking to retain a strong measure of male hegemony both socially and legally. Despite reservations, exposés by investigative journalists and continued pressure from middle-class backed Members of Parliament eventually forced the formulation and passage of bill targeting the white slave trade and limiting male legal dominance in rape cases.