WOMEN'S LABOUR: WOMEN'S POWER?
Women in the Western Australian labour movement from the early 1900s to the Depression

Robin Rosemary Joyce

B.A. (Hons), Dip. Ed., Grad. Dip. Public Policy, Grad. Dip. Professional Communication, M.A. Literature and Communication.

20 Chisholm Street, Ainslie, A.C.T. 2602.

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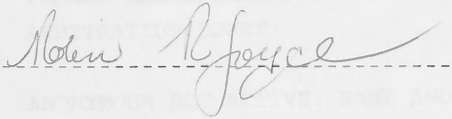
DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own account of my research and all sources used have been acknowledged.



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The stimulus for this thesis came from my research on feminism in Labor Women's organisations in Western Australia. It was clear that Labor women did more than provide tea and cakes for "real" male activists behind the scenes. Women had been as politically active, although not as well rewarded (or recorded), from the formation of the ALP in Western Australia.

Victorian and New South Wales women's activities *had* been recorded and there was no reason to believe that such activism had not been duplicated in WA. Beadle's and Shelley's records demonstrated that some women had been active in the broader labour movement as well as in the Party.

Records in the Battye Library, press clippings and accounts in Beadle's scrap books in the Evelyn Wood Papers and interviews with Shelley and Rosa Townsend (a member of Shelley's union) showed that a number of women had been union officials and that many more had contributed to industrial action on behalf of women. Rather than being dependent on male breadwinners (another fallacy that required exploding), women were in the workforce and were prepared to take action to improve their conditions. Of course, they failed at times - not only because of the usual difficulties faced by workers in making industrial gains, but because of special difficulties experienced because they were women.

Despite the limitations of the material I was encouraged in my work by my first supervisor, Dr Marian Aveling, with whom I worked at the beginning of the research. Dr Tom Stannage and Dr Lenore Layman also contributed briefly to supervision of the project in this early period.

On my transfer to the Australian National University, Ms Daphne Gollan provided invaluable assistance over a substantial period. On her retirement, Dr Elizabeth Waters

had the unenviable task of taking over a supervisory role on a thesis which had been through a number of manifestations.

The work then came to a standstill while career, family responsibilities and study related to my career became priorities.

Associated with these career interests was my development of Cecilia Shelley's story in a 3 part mini-series. I am grateful to the ACT Cultural Council for their support for the script through one of their arts Awards. In 1986 I retrieved the work and, in manuscript form for possible publication, sent it to the University of Western Australian Press. In that form it has been through the Reader stage and has been re-submitted for further consideration. I appreciate the support given by the Press.

At the end of 1987 I decided to submit the work for the degree for which it was originally proposed. Dr John Tillotson was assiduous in assisting me with the relevant information, and although the thesis has been brought to fruition with no additional supervision, I am grateful to him for this help. Staff in the History office, the Menzies Library and the Graduate School have been of tremendous assistance in alerting me to sources of information related to the technical requirements for the thesis.

I would also like to thank Dr Rob Pascoe for reading the manuscript and providing me with some excellent advice on re-working the material for a more substantial thesis. Some of this advice has been incorporated in the thesis for submission at Masters level. However, any further improvements which another reader may decide should have been made are entirely my responsibility.

My family and friends have been supportive in my decision to complete and submit the thesis. For this I thank them.

ABSTRACT

Between the early 1900s and the 1930s Depression Western Australian women workers in factories, the hotel and catering industry, laundries and boarding houses and private homes pursued industrial improvements. They challenged the myth that breadwinners were necessarily male, but failed to win equal pay.

Arising from this failure, women's early industrial activity does not enjoy the status it deserves. A complementary claim is that men in the labour movement undermined women's claims to legitimacy in the workforce. Both ignore the complexities associated with relationships within the labour movement and the industrial and social environment in which the women worked.

A simplistic analysis of women's political and industrial behaviour, successes and failures is avoided by using the framework provided by Stephen Lukes, which includes investigation of subjective interests.

The demographic, economic, social, political and industrial background influenced the women's aspirations and their resolution. In particular, links forged between non-Labor and Labor women, the formation of women's branches of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) and women's union activity changed the political and industrial landscape.

Overt, covert and latent conflict in women's workplaces was harnessed, subsequent political activity often resulting in arbitration and, at times, strike action. Although leadership was important, rank and file union members were essential to women's successful use of union and ALP structures and the Arbitration Court to achieve their aims.

However, the level of commitment and activism of leaders Jean Beadle and Cecilia Shelley were more widely known than that of followers. Associated with the publicity given leaders is the recognition that Labor men filled this role in significantly greater numbers than did women. As a consequence, general histories of the labour movement do not

reflect this work. Although it also needs to be acknowledged that rank and file men's activities were also neglected, it is assumed that men were active. This thesis gives a special place to women to redeem this inconsistency.

Class and ideological conflicts, as well as those related to gender, limited women's success in the structures they used to challenge the prevailing view of women's place in the workforce. Despite difficulties, women had varying successes in achieving their aim to improve women's industrial conditions in Western Australia in early 1900s to the Depression.

ABBREVIATIONS

Australian Labor Party	ALP
Australian Council of Trade Unions	ACTU
Australian Federation of Women Voters	AFWV
Australian Workers Union	AWU
Eastern Goldfields Hospital Employees Union	EGHEU
Eastern Goldfields Women's Political Labor league	EGWPLL
Hotel, Club, Caterers, Tearooms, Restaurant Industrial Union of Workers	HCCTRIUW
Karrakatta Club	KC
King Edward Memorial Hospital	KEMH
Labor Women's Organisation	LWO
National Council of Women	NCW
One Big Union	OBU
Shop Assistants Union	SAU
South Australian Teachers Union	SATU

South Australian Women Teachers Education Guild	SAWTEG
State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia	SSTUWA
Trades and Labour Council	TLC
Victorian Women's Political and Social Crusade	VWPSC
Western Australian Metropolitan Female Printers Union	WAMFPU
Women High School Teachers Association	WHSTA
Women's Electoral Lobby	WEL
Women's Christian and Temperance League	WCTU
Woman Organiser	WO
Women's Political and Social Crusade	WPSC
Women's Political and Suffrage League	WPSL

INTRODUCTION

> In regard to employment we have announced our intention to legislate in May for job creation programs to create up to 70000 jobs with guidelines requiring, among other things, preference for the long term unemployed and those who have never worked because they are the people who are most likely to obtain jobs in the context of economic recovery, and for half of the jobs created to be for women.
>
> Ralph Willis, Minister for Industrial Relations, 1983.

In April 1983 the National Economic Summit Conference took place in Canberra. The Summit's work was referred to as historic by the Government, media and Australian population, partly due to the belief it could change the dismal economic reality; partly general euphoria. That it was an historic occasion was true in some respects, not the least of which was the Accord agreed by the Summit delegates. However, one outcome which was not given its due at the time or subsequently was the view of women's legitimacy in the workforce expressed in the statement on women and their place in the paid workforce that 'half of the jobs created [should be] for women'. [1]

Despite the absence of women's organisations and that so few delegates were women, one of the most important changes in the perception of women's role was effected. The statement from the Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations was endorsed by Government members, State Premiers, representatives from the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and captains of industry. In a context where women's integral part in the paid workforce was changing only slowly to become more readily recognised by economic remuneration, promotional opportunities and access

to a wide range of jobs or career paths equal to those offered men, the statement was a landmark. For the first time, women's role as paid workers had been legitimised - they were seen as entitled to jobs, equally with men, despite the poor economic conditions. However, this was not an easy victory as women's legitimacy in the workplace had been an objective of women's continuing political activity since the early 1900s. From this period Australian women made a major contribution to improvements in their working conditions through their continuing activity on behalf of women.

Industrial relations and progressive movements are not immune from conflicts based on class and gender and these dogged the women's activities. Most significant was that as women strove to improve their working conditions the representative organisations through which they worked were limited by an ideology which focussed primarily on inequalities based on class. Where gender was acknowledged as a factor in discrimination, analysis was often limited by theory uninformed by feminist ideology. At the same time, women's interest in achievements for women were, at times, subverted by their own commitment to the labour movement. As a result, women's industrial demands were sometimes consciously, or unconsciously, set aside to promote the welfare of the group conventionally described as workers - male breadwinners.

The stories of women such as Jean Beadle and Cecilia Shelley, to the more well known Victorian and New South Wales (NSW) women such as Muriel Heagney and Jessie Street, serve to illustrate major themes in those early fights for equality. However, the broader story gives less publicised or unnamed women activists their due.

The lack of information in general histories does not prove that women were not participants in the labour movement or on the shop floor in attempts to improve their working conditions, merely that their efforts were unrecorded. It is even more likely that their activity in a

province generally regarded as masculine would be suspect and hidden from posterity, or at best, ignored. This creates problems for researchers who must rely on piecemeal information to put together a history of women's activities in the labour movement.

This made my initial work on women in blue collar work in factories, the hotel and catering industry, laundries and boarding houses and private homes in Western Australia a challenge. However, a corollary of this is the excitement of recording new material as was undertaken in my Honours Thesis, "Feminism in Labor Women's Organisations 1905 to 1917" in 1979. [2] This work also provided the basis for my presentations at the Women's Section of the 1981 ANZAAS Conference and the Women and Labour Conference in June 1982. In 1984 these papers and the results of further research on this early activism were published as "Feminism: an early tradition amongst Western Australian Labor Women" [3] and "Labor women: Political Housekeepers or Politicians?" [4]

The first article dedicated to the study of Cecilia Shelley's activism, Jan Carter's "The Brewery Worker's Daughter", was published in her collection of short biographies, *Nothing to Spare: Recollections of Australian Pioneering Women*. [5] This established women such as Shelley as worthy of a biographer's study, providing a welcome change from the concentration on male labour history. In part, this thesis aims to contribute to a body of work which gives names and activities to the virtually unknown rather than subsuming individuals in a general history of women's work.

In 1982 Wendy Brady's Honours Thesis, "Women Workers in the Western Australian Hotel and Catering Industry, 1900 - 1925" [6] was completed. Brady subsequently published "Serfs of the sodden scone: women workers in the Western Australian hotel and catering industry, 1900 - 1925". [7] This work sets the context for Cecilia Shelley's work in the short period which is covered in this thesis. In addition, Brady compares the relative openness of the Western

Australian unions to women's membership with those in the eastern states. This adopts the ideas taken up in discussions between Irene Greenwood and Manning Clarke about the hospitable attitudes between the classes in Western Australian women's politics. [8]

A specialist study of women's political and industrial involvement in the Victorian labour movement in a similar period was made in Melanie Raymond's M.A. thesis, "Women's Industrial and Political Involvement in the Victorian Labour Movement". [9] Adey Ryan's "Rhetoric and Reality The Amalgamated Clothing and Allied Trade Union of Australia and the 1927 Clothing Trades Case" [10] gave special attention to the case which affected Western Australian women's wages in the clothing industry - drawing attention to the limits imposed on women's successes because of the myths associated with their role in paid work. However, as with most such studies these concentrated on eastern states examples.

Jean Beadle did not excite so much interest as Cecilia Shelley in specialised published work until Dianne Davidson's *Women on the Warpath: Feminists of the First Wave* [11] was published in 1997. Beadle also appears briefly in *The Light on the Hill*. [12] At the same time as discussing her work with Ross McMullin I spoke of Cecilia Shelley's role, and it is interesting that the colourful woman who created difficulties for the WA ALP in 1925 is not referred to in the book. This example suggests that the Jan Carter biography referred to earlier was an important contribution to a labour world in which the more acceptable Beadle is given a place (although a minor one).

A continuing interest in the members of the Hotel, Club, Caterers, Tearooms and Restaurants Union is demonstrated by Beryl Hacker's work, *Rosa: A Biography of Rosa Townsend*, [13] published in 1994. A voice is now being given to one of Cecilia Shelley's followers during the 1960s.

May Holman's work, which is discussed only briefly in this thesis, has been more fully recorded than the non-

parliamentary activists through general histories of Western Australian politics. A former Western Australian MLA, Judyth Watson, has commenced a biographical work on this enigmatic figure - the only woman to win an important role in the Parliamentary Labor Party as well as its women's organisations in this period.

General histories of women's paid work have been completed, such as Edna Ryan's *Two thirds of a Man* [14] which concentrates on women's industrial situation in NSW. Her earlier book with Anne Conlon, *Gentle Invaders*, [15] provides some telling material on attitudes to women workers and the living wage, again concentrating on Victorian and NSW examples. As is shown in this thesis, at times awards which covered such workers were ignored in the Western Australian context. Women often had to fight for their conditions factory by factory, or by geographic location.

The roles undertaken by women were more varied than can be demonstrated by the more easily detected history of leaders. However, although it can be established that numbers of women became active in their unions they are often un-named. While Beadle and Shelley are named frequently in minutes and old newspaper articles, women's reminiscences and occasional notes made during Arbitration Court hearings, records are often incomplete. For example, women are often known by their husband's given names or initials or referred to only by title.

Arising from the failure to win equal pay it is often concluded that women in WA in the early 1900s did little industrially for women workers. A complementary argument is that Labor men and their union counterparts undermined any activity the women undertook. Both criticisms have some basis, but do not provide the whole story. Rather, such assertions ignore the complexities associated with relationships within the labour movement and the industrial and social environment in which the women worked. It is also unlikely that women, either forced into the work force or choosing to join it, had no opinion on the status of their

participation.

In addition, a simplistic analysis of women's political and industrial behaviour does not do the topic justice. To do so, Stephen Lukes' analysis of power [16] is used to examine the information available and to provide a basis for speculation.

Lukes' three dimensional model is discussed in Chapter 1 and is used in this thesis to examine women's activities and the political structures in which they sought to redress their grievances. The framework provides for the investigation of power relationships such as decision making and control over the political agenda; the way in which issues or potential issues arise; observable (overt or covert) and latent conflict; and the level of understanding of subjective, as opposed to real, interests. Women's activities at the decision making level, including their control over the political agenda in narrow and broad terms have an important place in the thesis.

A brief sketch of the demographic, economic, social, political and industrial period background against which these activists worked is at Chapter 2. The special circumstances associated with gender and the public manifestation of these in women's private and public lives are also given particular attention in this section.

Women's early activism in the Labor Party and non-party women's organisations established a foundation for their industrial activity. A combination of industrial activity and pursuit of feminist theory and practice often drew women of different classes together on a broad range of women's issues. The diversity of this work and the organisations in which women work is described in Chapter 3.

This chapter includes an examination of the concept that the interests that women have in common over-ride those which separate them. Sisterhood, while un-named, was important to those early women who fought for justice for working women, including those in unions outside the immediate focus of the thesis. Women's activism in the State

School Teachers' Union of Western Australia (SSTUWA) is relevant as it was often teaching to which the children of those women working in the labour movement aspired. Appendix 5 takes the complexities of sisterhood versus class a little further in the case study of the South Australian Teachers Union (SATU).

Chapter 4 develops an understanding of the industrial and social conditions the women sought to change. As well as considering working conditions, the cost of living for women is discussed - demonstrating clearly the inequity associated with unequal pay.

Evidence of women's membership of union and ALP structures is discussed in Chapter 5. The complexities of the labour movement's openness to debate on industrial issues as they related to women workers are also considered here.

In Chapter 6 the work undertaken through the Arbitration Court to remedy these conditions is discussed in general. Shelley's particular role in the Court is dealt with in a later chapter, demonstrating the advantage of having a feisty female representative to women's aims. In comparison, reliance on a male Advocate was, at times, a factor in women's failure to achieve their aims. This was not always acknowledged as women in the labour movement often attributed their successes to such Advocates' representation. Arbitration Court personnel attitudes toward trade union women's demands are an important topic in this chapter as dismissal of cases, decisions and the credence given women witnesses were significant factors in assessing the women's relative power in raising and sustaining issues on the movement's agenda.

Overt, covert and latent conflict in women's workplaces in the form of complaints and, in the more radical examples, stop work meetings, was harnessed by women in the labour movement. Subsequent political activity often resulted in disputes being taken to arbitration and, at times, strike action. In unions, conflict was likely to occur over who

should win positions of power, a normal activity in any organisational hierarchy. However, attitudes to women's working conditions and women activists were also debated trenchantly at times. The political wing of the labour movement was also a potential power base for activists and again women became involved in conflict over positions in the hierarchy and attitudes expressed through the movement. The important contribution made by rank and file women in this context is detailed in Chapter 7.

Women such as Jean Beadle and Cecilia Shelley [17] were more well known, their activities recorded in newspapers and in ALP records of the period. Apart from fragmentary references to her in published works, as noted above, Beadle's work as the Woman Organiser (WO) for the ALP was well recorded in the *Westralian Worker*, as was Shelley's last appearance as a member of the ALP at the 1925 State Conference.

The case studies in Chapters 8 and 9 take advantage of these records and are designed to provide detailed information on the backgrounds, level of commitment and activism typical of the women who are the subject of this thesis. Beadle and Shelley were particularly active in both strands of the labour movement, Beadle between 1900 and 1942 and Shelley from 1916 to the 1960s. In addition, these stories develop an understanding of the extent to which women in the labour movement were hindered by the social conditions under which the methods and strategies required to win male industrial success were at times instrumental in limiting their industrial success.

Last, but most important from a feminist perspective, is the capacity of Lukes' model to appraise subjective and real interests. Feminist theory espoused throughout the 1970s suggests that women have been dissuaded from seeing their real interests in independence, economic self reliance and freedom from gender stereo-typing. Instead, it has been claimed, women have been encouraged to believe that their ancillary role to men is essential, resulting in their

rejecting arguments that they should have an independent place in the work-force with subsequent economic equality and job choice.

The influence of socialisation through which the women who are the focus of this thesis may have been encouraged to see their interests as those imposed by the dominant group is considered in relation to Labor women's dedication to achieving improved conditions for the working class as a whole. This is an area in which only tentative conclusions may be drawn. However, it is an important dimension of women's functioning in the labour movement. During the period under examination only some women argued that women's place in the workforce was necessarily confined to a small range of "suitable" occupations. However, at the same time these women often recognised the limitations imposed by the current ideology.

Women in the eastern states appear to have been more aware than Western Australians of the value of publicity for their ideology and its practice. Heagney was a prolific pamphlet writer, Alice Henry published booklets and books and, with Street, used the newspaper columns to great advantage. The *Centenary Gift Book*, [18] published in Victoria in 1934, was dedicated to women's activities, and is another example of women publishing written material in a substantial form to increase the public's knowledge of their beliefs and their implementation.

Jean Daley, a prominent Labor woman and trade unionist, used the *Centenary Gift Book* to promote women workers' cause in a short article, "The Trade Union Woman". [19] She described the formation of the first female trade union in 1800, by a seamstress who was the sole breadwinner in her large family. Her name was not recorded. It is quite possible that her activity, rather than being an isolated incident, was an example of spontaneous, spasmodic organisation by women whose individual circumstances compelled them to seek protection though organisation.

Records kept by the Trades Hall Council Committee of

Victoria, which formed many of the later female labour organisations, show that there was significant union activity amongst women. The Dressmakers Union, Office-cleaners Union, Domestic Workers Union, Printing Trades Union and the Confectionery Union included women. They were organisers as well as members. When the Office-cleaners Union became the expanded Miscellaneous Workers Union one woman, Mrs F. Anderson JP, rather than losing her influence, moved up in the hierarchy to become Secretary. She was a Trades Hall Councillor also, a position in which she was able to influence the activities of affiliated unions.

Tantalising solitary examples of activism appear in the small number of records available. For instance Mrs Cross JP, was the Woman Organiser with the Printing Trades Union and a number of women were also on its governing board.

The Female Confectioners Union was one union which separated women's organisation from that of male members in the industry. Mrs Wearne JP was Secretary and a Mrs Hill Assistant Secretary. The Manufacturing Grocers Union, with a large membership of women, included women on its governing board and a Miss Corkhill was President of the Clerical Division of the Australian Railways Union. [20]

It is not likely that the situation in Victoria was extraordinary, merely that women's union activities in other states were not so widely publicised by their contemporaries. Beadle's organisation of women in food manufacturing in WA, [21] for instance is on a par with the organisation of similar industries in Victoria in the same period. Again, the work of Mrs Casson in the Western Australian Metropolitan Female Printers Union (WAMFPU) [22] is similar to the Victorian activity. However, these activities have not been recorded in published documents and even unpublished sources, such as union documentation and minutes of meetings, are elusive.

The catalyst which precipitated most women into industrial activity was workplace conditions. These were so poor that at times women workers had no option but to take

action against employers. To facilitate their demands women sought leaders, joined unions or participated in their establishment. Even when women did not initiate action, they were ready to respond when encouraged them to do so. Rather than accepting conditions, and allowing their anger to dissipate through spasmodic spontaneous action, women often became an essential part of the movement to improve working conditions for all women.

Women participated at different levels, from membership to taking more public roles. Some organised unions, others served on union executives or as paid secretaries and organisers. Holman worked through the union movement, eventually won a parliamentary seat and then used this as a forum for her industrial concerns.

Women's success depended on personal qualities of strength, tenacity and fortitude as well as on a capacity to work with the system of arbitration, the labour movement and employers. Despite their aspirations, women activists' power was limited by the way in which women's roles were prescribed by traditional expectations. In addition, women's own perception of their role and wider community often hampered their ability to fully exploit their contribution to the labour movement.

Although women had worked in the paid workforce before, during and after the war, their role as legitimate workers in paid employment was always under threat when unemployment was high. The low profile taken by the ALP in the Depression years had important consequences for women in particular. In addition, the fall back position adopted by the ACTU on the basic wage meant that the reality of women's position as breadwinners in many cases was not fully accepted.

Together with this, the lack of logic in a family wage concept which ignored women's responsibilities for families was never raised in the Arbitration Court, which ultimately controlled disputed wage levels and conditions. For women workers the family wage which excluded them, depriving them of equal pay and equal right to work through the mythology

it supported, substantiated the belief that women were peripheral, rather than legitimate, members of the work force. In the aftermath of war women often had to earn an income to support a family. However, although this might have been acknowledged, such cases were easily hidden when seen as individual instances rather than leading to a logical conclusion that women had an equal entitlement to a family wage.

Women in white collar professions, such as those covered by the SSTUWA, were not immune from the mythology which ignored the realities of some women's lives. Despite the professional nature of their work they also suffered inequalities. Similarly, the personal and gender based conflicts which occurred over whether amelioration or radical change should be fostered by non-party women's organisations were reflected in professional unions, as shown by conflicts in the SATU.

These conflicts reflected those women's organisations outside the labour movement which also embraced middle class women in activism on women's behalf. Such organisations supported an ideology which could have been expected to assist professional women.

Despite their efforts, the 1930s Depression left women in no doubt that their status in the workforce was tenuous, won only through a temporary need for labour. Women's role as workers was accepted by society only as a short term necessity and only so far as they were hidden in low paid, low status jobs unwanted by the workers seen as legitimate - the male breadwinner. Although unable to succeed at the levels established from the 1980s, women in the labour movement played a significant part in the attempt to change their position from the early 1900s.

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In the federal election held in March 1996 the Liberal-National Coalition went to the Australian people with a proposal to radically change the industrial relations system. Designed to encourage the use of individual work

contracts, known as an Australian Workplace Agreement (AWA), and limit the influence of centralisation of wages and conditions in which unions play a major role through the Industrial Relations Commission, the proposal was central to the Coalition's promises. Women's organisations were particularly concerned about the influence of the changes on women's wages and conditions. Unions were also concerned as, although some enterprise bargaining had taken place in the later years of the Labor Government, the new proposals suggested a marked change in industrial relations. The philosophy behind the proposals demonstrated a distinct break with that associated with the ALP's attitude to industrial relations in the years 1983 to 1995. As a consequence, the ALP reaffirmed its commitment to a mix of enterprise bargaining and recognition of the important role of unions and the Industrial Relations Commission at the 41st ALP National Conference in January 1998. (See Appendix 3).

More specifically linked to the changing fortunes of women in the industrial relations system, and demonstrating an even more dramatic return to some of those conditions women fought to overturn in the early 1900s is the current WA industrial relations system. (See Appendix 4).

NOTES

1. Ralph Willis, National Economic Summit, Canberra 1983.

2. Joyce, Robin, "Feminism in Labor Women's Organisations 1905 to 1917", Honours thesis, University of Western Australia, 1979.

3. Joyce, Robin "Feminism in the Western Australian Labor Women's Organisations" in *All Her Labours*, Vol 1, Hale and Iremonger, 1984 (a).

4. Joyce, Robin "Labor women: Political Housekeepers or Politicians? in *Australian Women in the Political System*, ed Marian Simms, Longman Cheshire, 1984 (b).

5. Carter, Jan *Nothing to Spare: Recollections of Australian Pioneering Women*, Penguin, 1981.

6. Brady, Wendy "Women Workers in the Western Australian Hotel and Catering Industry, 1900 - 1925", Honours Thesis, Murdoch University.

7. Crawford, Patricia ed *Studies in WA History: Women in WA History*, 7, 1983.

8. Greenwood, Irene Letter to Robin Joyce 27/8/1976.

9. Raymond, Melanie "Women's Industrial and Political Involvement in the Victorian Labour Movement", University of Melbourne, 1987.

10. Ryan, Adey "Rhetoric and Reality The Amalgamated Clothing and Allied Trade Union of Australia and the 1927 Clothing Trades Case", Honours Thesis, Canberra, 1992.

11. Davidson, Dianne *Feminists on the Warpath,* University of Western Australia Press, 1997.

12. McMullin, Ross *The Light on the Hill*, Oxford University Press, 1991.

13. Hacker, Beryl *Rosa: A Biography of Rosa Townsend,* University of Western Australian Press, 1994.

14. Ryan, Edna *Two-thirds of a Man Women & Arbitration in New South wales 1902-08*, Hale & Iremonger, 1984.

15. Conlon, Anne and Ryan, Edna *Gentle Invaders Australian Women at Work 1788 - 1974*, Nelson, 1975.

16. Lukes, Stephen *Power: A Radical View*, MacMillan, 1974.

17. Arising from the fragmentary nature of the material some inconsistencies in referring to names will occur throughout the thesis. For instance, well known women who are referred to by title, given name and surnames in the research material are given their title and full name initially and their surname on subsequent occasions. Some women are known only by their title and surname, an initial and surname or their husband's given name and surname. In the interests of providing the reader with as much information as is available these women are referred to as fully as possible when first noted in the text. If they are mentioned later only their surnames are used if appropriate.

18. *The Centenary Gift Book*, Victoria, 1934.

19. *ibid.*

20. Muriel Heagney's collection of papers held at the Mitchell Library, Sydney, includes references to women's involvement in a range of political activities.

21. Printers and Kindred Trades Union Papers, held at the Battye Library, Perth.

22. Minutes of the Metropolitan Council, Australian Labor Party 1918, held at the Battye Library, Perth.

CHAPTER 1

POWER, MYTHS AND RESPONSES

> It is most unfortunate that many men, and also many women, hold the opinion that women are to be classed as unskilled workers; that they cannot learn to do certain things, and are therefore below the level of men. It is this feeling that prevents the proper organisation of Labor.
>
> Mick Sawtell, Speaking on One Big Union, in 1919.

A double task

Women had a double task in establishing their entitlement to employment. Special qualities based on gender and highly regarded in moral rather than economic terms were considered intrinsic to women's capabilities. This belief potentially undermined women's power because of the labour movement's largely masculine predisposition - a dedication to ensuring economic security for the breadwinner. This breadwinner was overwhelmingly seen as male, a myth that was bolstered by Arbitration Court decisions, often arrived at through union argument which ignored the breadwinning role of many women.

Despite the difficulty of trying to achieve class and gender equality, women in the WA labour movement developed an ideological and practical foundation on which the modern women's movement was able to build. In doing so they were informed by the ideology and activities of women Australia-wide and overseas. In particular, the influx of activists from NSW and Victoria to WA during the 1890s and early 1900s made a major impact, establishing women's Labor organisations as well as providing leadership in the general labour movement.

Although the structures established in the labour

movement were significant, women's successes or failures were also dependent on their roles as individuals and members of women's organisations and the allocation of power in these organisations.

A model for gender analysis

Stephen Lukes' [1] three dimensional model of power provides a useful framework for analysing the way in which women activists functioned in the labour movement and sympathetic women's organisations. His model provides a framework in which four levels of power relationships are examined, overcoming the limitations imposed by one and two dimensional models. For example, a one dimensional model which focuses on behaviour in decision making, limits a study to observable conflicts of interest revealed by political participation. The two dimensional approach expands the boundaries of the study but remains limited as it adds only potential decisions (which are later aborted) to the equation. Both models focus on observable conflict.

Unlike the two models described above, Lukes' three dimensional model takes into account influences which inhibit participants, hindering their successful operation in the political structures in which redress of grievances is sought. This model includes recognition of the influence of socialisation through which individuals may be encouraged to see their interests as those which are imposed by the dominant group. Through a perceived convergence of interests of the dominant and dominated groups observable conflict is prevented from arising in the first place. Labor women of the early 1900s, dedicated as they were to achieving socialism, or at least better conditions for the working class in general, were candidates for the dilemma focussed upon by this model.

Lukes defines a grievance as more than that which results in conflict and resolution but also as '...an undirected complaint arising out of everyday experience, a vague feeling of unease or sense of deprivation'. [2] Even

more insidious, and directly relevant to women's perceptions of their role is when a situation develops '...to prevent people, to what ever degree, from having a grievance by shaping their perceptions, cognations and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things, either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they value it as divinely ordained or beneficial.' [3]

Power relationships under the model can be used to examine the following: decision making and control over the political agenda; the way in which issues or potential issues are raised; observable (overt or covert) and latent conflict; and the level of understanding amongst women activists of their subjective, as opposed to their real, interests.

At the decision making level, including control over the political agenda, the activities of women on union executives and as members of the State Executive of the ALP and the party's committees, councils and branches provide a wealth of material.

The second level of influence, that in which issues and potential issues are raised, requires examination of the labour movement's openness to discussion of issues specific to women workers. Industrial issues which involved women included unemployment in predominantly or exclusively female occupations, equal pay and the significance of the family wage concept to women workers. Political issues such as women's representation on the ALP Disputes Committee (dedicated to industrial disputes); representation of women's objectives in the Arbitration Court and women's role in the ALP hierarchy, unions and Arbitration Court, disputes and proposed or actual industrial action are also an important focus. Arbitration court personnel attitudes toward trade union women's demands are as relevant as the dismissal of cases, decisions and the credence given women witnesses.

Thirdly, the Lukes model includes observable (overt or

covert) and latent conflict. Conflict did arise in women's workplaces in the form of complaints and, in the more radical examples, stop work meetings were held to discuss them. With the assistance of women in the labour movement these concerns were harnessed into political activity often resulting in disputes being taken to arbitration and, at times, strike action. In unions, conflict was likely to occur over who should win positions of power, a normal activity in any organisational hierarchy. However, attitudes to women's working conditions and women activists were also debated trenchantly at times. The political wing of the labour movement was also a potential power base for activists and again women were likely to become involved in conflict over positions in the hierarchy and attitudes expressed through the movement.

By focussing on industrial policy, attitudes to women in the workforce and women activists, the role of women in the labour movement and responses from the movement can be clarified. Another aspect is the part electoral concerns may have played in determining responses - the possibility that women's work issues were seen as a liability or advantage may have influenced whether they were supported. In this context, women's groups outside the movement had the opportunity to make a contribution to the labor women's efforts by projecting women's issues as important electoral issues and relevant to a political party's success.

Last, but most important from the feminist perspective, is the model's capacity to appraise subjective and real interests. Feminist theory suggests that women have been dissuaded from seeing their real interests in independence, economic self reliance and freedom from gender stereotyping. It has been suggested that instead women have been encouraged to believe that their ancillary role to men is essential, resulting in their rejecting arguments that they should have an independent place in the work-force with subsequent economic equality and job choice.

Although only tentative conclusions to be drawn, this

is an important dimension of women's functioning in the labour movement. During the period under examination only some women argued that women's place in the workforce was necessarily confined to a small range of "suitable" occupations. However, at the same time these women often recognised the limitations imposed by the current ideology. Consideration of these dilemmas helps develop an understanding of the extent to which women in the labour movement were hindered by the social conditions under which the methods and strategies required to win male industrial success were at times instrumental in limiting their industrial success.

Women's activism can be examined and described at five levels of participation. The least active level is that of union membership. However this should not be underestimated as the organisation of unions in the period show that workers had to make an active choice to join. They attended general meetings at which they decided whether to join and there is some evidence that women took the initiative on organising such meetings.

A firmer commitment to action can be seen in the numbers of women who were elected to union executives. This involved them in participation in union activity to the level where they were recognised activists and deemed suitable for the executive. They also had to canvass support.

Participation in strikes or as witnesses in Arbitration Court hearings involved women in another level of activity, that of questioning the authority of employers and their passive stereo-type in a male dominated arena.

The fourth level of activism is exhibited by women who observed the poor working conditions and channelled women's discontent or latent grievances into positive action. Such women unionised women's labour and at times fulfilled executive functions until a rank and file member was ready to take over. These activists were politically aware and committed to the labour movement and its goals for social

and economic equality. They had thought out their position and often provided a theoretical framework for practical action. This level of awareness sets them apart from the first three levels of activity.

The fifth group comprises those women who acted as leaders of the organised members. Leadership was exhibited through their militancy, compilation of submissions such as Basic Wage or Workers' Compensation claims and in pursuing policy changes in the political arena. As Advocates in the Arbitration Court such women demonstrated particular skills in leadership and an ability to vocalise women workers' discontent in a hostile environment.

An articulate beginning

Women's appreciation of their situation, although not always articulated, led many of them to question their conditions of work. When these concerns were combined with women's politicisation, charismatic leadership or a specific grievance, women became more vocal about their position. Sometimes the change they accomplished was so minute that it is easy to deny the existence or importance of their activities. However, the nature of the opposition has to be taken into account when assessing the results. When the strength and the entrenched nature of such opposition is recognised perhaps it can be suggested that women unionists' awareness of their position was even more acute than has been proposed.

A Western Australian Labor woman, Olive M. Johnson, contributed to discussion which recognised women's special position in the workforce. Early in the 1900s she wrote an article, "Women as an Industrial factor Under the Capitalist System", in which she suggested that there were two strands of thought operating: the view she described as old fashioned, that women's place was in the home, having 'no business outside it; that shop factory, store, office, science, art and literature [were] beyond the bounds of women's activity' [4] and the opposing ideal that she linked

to women's rights. These she considered as freedom from economic dependence on a man and having access to any occupation. [5] She also argued that, as the home was no longer the unit of social and industrial activity, economic development on the capitalist model had 'knocked the economic pedestal from under the woman in the home'. [6]

Johnson's article was clearly predicated on an understanding that class differences between employer and employee operated to deny the worker economic justice. At the same time she enumerated the economic wrongs specific to women, reminding them of the advantages of unionisation. She was aware that women's role in the workforce was not without its drawbacks, acknowledging that while traditional women's role was not one to envy, the factory worker was 'forced into work that has unfitted her for life, sexually, socially, and intellectually. We know that we working women as well as the working men are mere wage slaves'. [7]

Despite these misgivings, she foretold a future in which she saw an industrial situation in which women would achieve economic freedom and independence. [8]

She anticipated the conflicts between class and gender which were to develop in the labour movement as women sought economic equality. Despite her own commitment, she also described women forced into the 'standing army of unemployed... [through poverty] as taking work from men. [9] She also suggested that, 'Often girls live at home, and their wages are only used for their own dress and pin-money, or to eke out the scant earnings of the family.' [10]

This was clearly not the case for all women, as is shown by the Western Australian census figures for 1911, 1921 and 1933. However the myth played a part in dividing women within the movement when women's industrial aims were seen to conflict with those of the male breadwinner. This assumption, unrelieved by (or in spite of) factual information, underlay the advocacy and decisions made in the Arbitration Court. At the same time, advocacy by workers' representatives, based on an ideology underpinned by class

consciousness, also played an important part in limiting women's options. This is a different facet of the ideology which suppressed women's attempts to enjoy other forms of equality, as strongly pursued by middle class women's organisations, but nonetheless potent in undermining their aims.

Evidence of some women's ability to overcome traditional expectations of women was demonstrated, not only by the activities of high profile women such as Beadle and Shelley but by women who were dissatisfied with their conditions, and as members of their union. Unionists' articulation of industrial aims and opinions of women in general on women's legitimacy in the workforce undermined traditional ideology and practice. These arguments had some clout as they arose from a broad range of women defending themselves and other women workers.

Beadle and Shelley were well known through their activities in the labour movement over many years. By example and articulation of their aims they provided ideals and information which counteracted ideology which maintained the status quo. Together with women such as Johnson, they contributed to a milieu in which women were encouraged to believe that they had a right to paid work and improved conditions. Some women were more than ready to join such leaders in long term involvement in the labour movement, while others opted in and out of industrial activity and discussion, as their circumstances dictated.

Women from a range of party political ideologies contributed to the environment in which Labor women worked. While members of the various women's organisations sometimes opposed each other in party political debates, they articulated similar ideas for improving women's condition in society, often forging links to do so.

The Australian Federation of Women Voters (AFWV), represented in WA by Mrs Bessie Rischbieth, was an organisation which fostered such links. Mrs A. Wheaton, President of the national organisation, was aware of the

difficulties faced by women in coming to terms with the limitations imposed upon them by their socialisation. However, she was at one with G.D.H. Cole in suggesting that women's community of purpose, however inadequately understood, would ultimately influence their thoughts and actions. [11]

Rischbieth sincerely believed that the movement she referred to as the "Cause" was classless. [12] The nature of membership of the Women's Service Guild (WSG) bears this out as staunch Labor women were members alongside middle class women such as Irene Greenwood's mother, Mary Driver, as well as members of conservative political groupings, such as Lady Winthrop Hackett.

Wheaton did not make the same claim but considered a dedication to women's rights, a so called community of purpose, overcame educational and class differences. However, she suggested that as women's activism diversified through their having won the vote and other advantages, ideas needed to be revised through continual vigilance and the Cause may need to be redefined to suit current circumstances. Throughout the years after the vote was won it is true that women took divergent approaches to party political affiliation. However, they often came together on issues such as equal pay through the WSG.

At a time when workers were fighting for industrial strength and developing a movement through which they could win equality on class grounds, it is not surprising that women in the labour movement were torn. Whether they could identify themselves as working class alongside women who, although they may not have had independent means, quite demonstrably lived very different lives from male or female factory workers, is questionable. At the same time, it was difficult for women in the labour movement to subsume their demands in those of their male co-members as they were fully aware of the differences in pay and opportunities based on gender.

Issues based clearly on gender differences in the

domestic environment, such as domestic violence or the distribution of family responsibilities and housework, so clearly articulated during the 1980s and 1990s, were not discussed widely (if at all) in this period. Women were therefore deprived of a feminist focus in which class would have been irrelevant. The "glass ceiling", affecting middle class women's opportunities, was far from an issue - these women were, in small numbers, trying to enter universities, maintain teaching careers and work in the public service - but were not necessarily associated with the labour movement. Although, for instance, women in the SSTUWA had an industrial profile in their own industry, they saw themselves as "professionals" and were unlikely to associate their industrial activity with that of blue collar workers.

Because women from different classes believed they had little in common on work related issues they often (but not always) worked separately to achieve industrial aims. This opened up the division between women who, although they may have worked together on some gender related issues, were encouraged on the basis of class to ignore these. This is not an uncommon occurrence throughout the current feminist debates on class and gender. Gender in the early 1900s, where economic inequalities were so much greater than in the 1990s, must have appeared a poor second to class as a dividing factor throughout much of the debate, even as women (and some men) in the labour movement sincerely tried to focus single mindedly on sex inequalities.

Women and their supporters could not help but be influenced by the mythology which undermined women's economic equality. In addition, the ideology of workers' representatives was underpinned by their anti-capitalist commitment. This provided an uneasy political and social background against which the women in the labour movement had to work to achieve their aims on behalf of women workers.

NOTES

1. Lukes, *op.cit.*

2. *ibid.*

3. *ibid.*

4. Johnson, Olive M. "Woman as an Industrial Factor Under the Capitalist System", typescript, Evelyn Wood Papers.

5. ibid.

6. ibid.

7. ibid.

8. ibid.

9. ibid.

10. ibid.

11. The Australian Federation of Women Voters, President's Address, c1950, photocopy in the possession of Robin Joyce.

12. ibid.

CHAPTER 2
WESTERN AUSTRALIAN BACKGROUND

> So even the woman of the classes in Australia is not like her husband bound up in maintaining the status quo. She is undermining it all the time, and all unconscious of what she is doing is standing for the larger justice, the equality of opportunity, the maternal idea as expressed in a hundred matter-of-fact details.
>
> Alice Henry, 1906 [1]

The composition of the Western Australian population and development of a manufacturing economy in what had been a largely agricultural state influenced the social and political environment, and indirectly, equitable outcomes for women workers. Over the period the rise and fall in the electoral fortunes of the ALP and its internal workings were more directly associated with the successes of political activists who used the party as a forum for their aims. In turn, the labour movement as a whole depended on the development of industrial legislation which supported workers, at both the state and federal level.

Population

Census figures for 1901, 1911, 1921 and 1933 describe the demographics of the Western Australian population - those people who directly participated in and influenced events in the state from the early 1900s to 1933. The figures show that the Western Australia population was weighted numerically in favour of males; employment was mainly in the primary sector; and residence was predominantly in Perth and the suburbs, although the goldfields and rural districts were also populated.

In 1901, two years after women in WA were enfranchised, the population comprised 71,249 females and 112,875 males.

In the metropolitan area, loosely covering Fremantle, Perth and their suburbs, there were 30,309 females and 37,122 males; in the goldfields the figures were 18,432 females and 41,023 males. [2] By 1911 the population had increased to 120,549 females, 161,565 males and, appearing on the census at this time, 114,550 Aborigines. [3] A total of 53,561 females and 53,231 males resided in Perth and suburbs; and 18,720 females and 24,945 males resided in Coolgardie and Coolgardie North - the most densely populated goldfields areas. These figures indicate that a large number of people were itinerants or living in sparsely populated areas. The census does not refer to whether Aboriginals were included in the figures based on geographical classification.

By 1921 the population was 155,454 females and 177,287 males. Statistics on literacy were included in the census for the first time: of the total population, 128,207 females and 144,572 males could read and write and 310 females and 433 males were able to read only. [4]

Males were predominant in the workforce and as breadwinners with the majority of dependents. Concentrated in the lower income brackets, they were largely wage and salary earners. Similarly, females who were in the workforce were wage and salary earners and concentrated in lower income brackets. Significantly, however, the numbers of women in the higher income brackets dropped dramatically in comparison with men. Again, examination of the categories of employers, professionals, and self employed show disproportionately large numbers of men.

It is important to note that large numbers of women had dependents in every census year. Some of the figures are beyond doubt, as they are compiled from responses to the census question requiring respondents to state their breadwinner status. Others, referring to women who described themselves as those whose husbands were absent, could conceal further women with dependents. Such women would have been the sole financial support of their families as the classification would include deserting husbands as well as

those temporarily absent.

A comparison of women's and men's employment and responsibility for dependents shows that although more men than women were in the workforce, women were taking on roles other than their traditional one as housewife. They entered the paid workforce even before World War 1. For instance, as early as 1911, 20,976 women, that is 17.40% of women, were breadwinners before the war would have increased the likelihood that women had to fend for themselves and their dependants. In 1921, 25,759 women were responsible for 128,910 dependents and in 1933 female breadwinners were a significant proportion of the female working population in all age groups and all income categories.

The single status of many men was also ignored in the mythology which promoted the family wage for men and lower rates of pay for women. In the years 1911, 1921 and 1933 the conjugal status for persons of working age who had never married demonstrate the shortcomings of the family wage concept. In 1911 not only were large numbers of males at working age unmarried but so were significant numbers of women. Such women, contrary to common mythology, clearly had no husband to support them. There were also single males and females of single status as they had been either widowed or divorced. Of these, 5,785 women were widowed and one hundred and three divorced and 4,180 men were widowed and 187 divorced.

In 1921 the conjugal status for persons of working age was: 32,895 females and 54,346 males never married; 8,526 females and 4,528 males widowed; and 294 females and 316 males divorced. [5]

Although in 1933 the majority of the population over twenty was married, a large proportion of both sexes were single, widowed or divorced. Female breadwinners were a significant proportion of the female working population in all age groups and income categories. The largest number, 5,713, were fifteen to nineteen years of age, earning under 52 pounds a year. In the group which earned no income there

were 800 women, between fifteen and twenty four, who classified themselves as breadwinners, indicating that the term was used, in the census at least, to describe a person who was responsible for dependants as well as male wage earners. In all, a total of 29,741 women in WA were breadwinners in 1933, a period when women were being forced out of the workforce on the grounds that they were depriving breadwinner males of their rightful employment.

Economy

As a beneficiary of the goldrushes, WA escaped the 1890s depression and industrial upheaval experienced in the remainder of Australia. However, it was not immune to the economic forces associated with two other major international events, World War 1 and its aftermath, and the 1930s Depression.

New labour markets gradually emerged during the 1920s, leading to economic diversification. In particular, a small industrial sector emerged, moving the economic base away from its predominantly agricultural focus. Women, for instance, were employed in occupations such as clothing and dress manufacture; food manufacture; printers, bookbinders and photography; textiles; tobacco; rubber and leather; education; clerical; domestic; furniture; chemicals and dyes; and health.

By 1929 the industrial sector provided opportunities for around 20,0000 workers - potentially opening more employment opportunities to women, who had been largely excluded from this previously small labour market. Despite the increased employment opportunities, women's unequal access was to continue to varying degrees. Under circumstances in which women were considered equally entitled to employment, it could have been expected that they should diversify their occupations along with male workers. However, the fledgling market was unable to provide the increase necessary to overcome the difficulties attendant on increasing the pool of labour through women's

inclusion.

The main contributors to the economy remained primary resources. General economic growth was impeded, comparing unfavourably with the national situation during the 1920s. Because of WA's dependence on the primary sector, unemployment was not new in this state when the Depression began, merely less significant in terms of numbers. The popular view that confidence was high in WA until poor wool and wheat prices in 1929 and 1930 preceded the Depression is challenged by figures on incomes and employment from 1917, and in particular during the mid-1920s. [6]

Amongst trade unionists unemployment rose from 5.4% in 1917 to 5.8% in 1920. By 1921 a steeper increase had occurred when 9.5% were unemployed, rising again in 1924/25 to 9.8% with subsequently lower levels until the peaks of 28.7%, 28% and 21% in 1931/32, 1932/33 and 1933/34. [7]

The Government's claim, in 1926, that they had accomplished the first economic surplus in sixteen years, rings hollow when the specifics of the economy are examined. [8] Although the majority of the population enjoyed a higher standard of living than in the past, an unequal redistribution of wealth had occurred: high income earners were achieving higher standards of living at the expense of low income earners. A similar transfer took place between the employed and unemployed so that the latter, although a small percentage of the population, were severely disadvantaged in a period of general optimism.

Workers responded to this situation, at times taking robust action to protect their wages and conditions. In the industrial sector they maintained a high level of industrial action until the early 1930s when the Depression forced activists into retreat (as can be seen from the lower level of industrial disputation in the period). The number of working days lost due to industrial disputes were significantly higher in 1917 (when nearly five million working days were lost) than at any other time between 1917 and 1933. In 1919 and 1920 over three million days were lost

but until 1926/27 the figures did not rise above one million.

Women were affected by these conditions, not only as partners of male breadwinners but as workers and as seekers of employment. In this period women took industrial action to assert their right to economic independence and, like their male counterparts, fought for improved working conditions. However, despite their widening occupational opportunities, and their increased participation in the workforce, women's legitimacy as paid workers was not recognised. Some of their problems in establishing their rights were exacerbated by deteriorating economic conditions.

Social changes

As could be expected, conditions in WA in this period changed considerably. Urbanisation was one of the most important features, occurring most dramatically during the 1920s and retracting during the 1930s. [9] Perth and its suburbs had all the features of modern living: electricity, sewerage and a good water supply. Communications had expanded, several newspapers were operating and the East-West rail link established in 1917 had been followed by the introduction of air flights between Perth and Adelaide by 1929. [10]

Social conditions also improved, a former Nationalist Party candidate, acknowledging Labor's support for charitable causes. [11] However, improvements were spasmodic and did not recognise women's economic responsibilities.

For instance, the Labor Government changed a policy under which fatherless children were removed from their mothers and made wards of the State. Monetary assistance to mothers was introduced on the basis that as the natural guardian in the absence of the father a mother should be given the opportunity to 'fulfil her natural desire to retain control and guidance of her children'. [12] Ironically, although women were recognised as responsible

for their children in these circumstances, their role as breadwinners was not given equal consideration.

Similarly, although the *Married Women's Protection Act Amendment Act* legislated to give married women some semblance of recognition, the Department of Labour meeting on industrial hygiene, held in 1924, shows that working women were still considered different from men. Not only were they seen as unequal to their male co-workers, their capabilities were often associated with children's, leading to similar working conditions.

There were no female delegates despite an agenda largely dedicated to discussing women's role in the workforce. Specialist legislation, claimed to benefit women, but often undermining their work status, was considered appropriate as, 'Females are especially liable to particular diseases and accidents...children are heedless and ignorant as compared with the average adult'. [13] By associating women with children rather than adults they were again isolated from consideration along with the male breadwinner.

Women's absences from work were recorded as being the result of sickness (2%), industrial and other accidents (2%), and personal (3%). The latter were deemed to be the result of maternity and domestic life, including menstruation and anaemia. It was also suggested that childbirth should preclude women from workforce participation as lack of care afterwards could cause serious disorders. [14] It was recommended women should not return to work until six weeks after the birth, depriving them of paid employment. On their return they were further deprived of opportunities through the imposition of weight restrictions.

Although the meeting carried some quite progressive recommendations, for example suggesting that women should not be excluded from work during the whole of their pregnancy as light work in suitable and hygienic conditions was beneficial, it was considered essential that the pregnancy be "normal". The recommendation that industry

provide a medical service with health care and supervision, or a system of pre-natal advice was forward looking. At the same time this would have served to make women, childbearing or not, appear an expensive form of labour.

When it was acknowledged that labour saving devices would diminish the need for weight restrictions women were potentially offered equal treatment. However, industry was slow to introduce such improvements. On the positive side of the ledger, a recommendation that rest rooms be built recognised that there were women in the workforce, and provided an improvement in their working conditions.

In addition, the recommendation that Factory Inspectors of both sexes should be employed provided new jobs for women and acknowledged their continued presence in the workforce. These positions provided women with reasonably high status work as inspectors were expected to have a school leaving certificate, competent knowledge of labour and health regulations and a knowledge of industrial methods and management and organisation of factories. [15]

Even in the early 1930s women and boys were equated when wages and overtime payments were debated in industries such as egg packing and pulping in which mostly women and boys were employed. [16] Female Factory Inspectors were not immune to the mythology which equated women's and children's work. In 1933 Miss Sylvia Donaldson, investigating general conditions in the industry (hygienic conditions, wages, overtime, tea money and records) cited the "working hours of women and boys" as the focus of her investigation. [17]

Education was an important part of WA's social environment. Free education to university level was open to women and was available to those who qualified, and could afford to be out of the paid workforce, from 1913. At the more general level, a letter to the editor of a local newspaper suggested that the Arbitration Court could include twelve shillings a year on items such as books and journals, ten shillings a year on library subscriptions and two pounds a year on newspapers as well as six pounds a year

specifically allocated to educational tuition, books and music in estimating a family's living wage.

As the letter was discussed by women from the labour movement, such as Mrs T. Butler and Miss Mamie Swanton, and the estimation was described as being a "living" or "standard" wage, it suggests that these items were expected to be purchased by all classes.

The ideology of women's work embraced during World War 1 was significant for women workers. During the war women were encouraged to become breadwinners and to enter occupations formerly considered suitable only for men. After the war many women remained in the workforce, enforced breadwinners, although popular ideology encouraged them to return to the home or to re-enter traditional female occupations.

Although the war years could be seen as liberating women they also entrenched the mythology and practice which prevented women making use of this seeming freedom from tradition. Women were employed in "male" occupations receiving a lower rate of pay than the former male employees. They were encouraged to help the war effort for less remuneration and on a short term basis, making use of women's traditional nurturing role: nurture of the family was superseded by nurture of the nation. This expanded the belief that women's only legitimate role was that of a woman at home, caring for a family and completely over-riding the different reality for large numbers of women. Many women were forced to remain in the workforce with dependents when widowed, deserted or responsible for an incapacitated father or husband.

Women organising their labour were not only the victims of the conflict between mythology based on gender and the reality, but of their unequal relationship with employers. They had to deal with the same problems in organising and obtaining fair working conditions and wages which faced male trade unionists - the unequal power relationship between the employer and employees. However, particular problems arising

from the significance given to gender put women at an added disadvantage in the labour market. Their accepted public role in the workforce was seen in terms of gender to which was attributed special qualities and capabilities, none of which were considered economically valuable, although regarded morally superior to those seen as male characteristics.

The Arbitration Court, the ALP and most union hierarchies were male dominated and influenced by the mythology. Although class was also an important factor in the struggle to obtain fair working conditions, gender was the predominant feature in subordinating working women's interests to those of the male working class, and ultimately to those of the employers.

Some of the disadvantages women workers suffered were caused by the paucity of women's opportunities in the small range of occupations open to them. This exacerbated the divisions based on class, education, experience, political beliefs and age which also affected male workers. Peculiar to women was also the division caused by marital status and moral issues.

An article appearing in the *West Australian* in 1914, entitled "A case for women", highlighted the way in which women's characters could be destroyed while participating in industrial cases. Immense publicity given to the savaging of a typist's character while she was a witness served to deter them from participating in cases on their own behalf. Although women's rights to be dealt with fairly without accusations about their sexuality were defended. [18] However, the attack served to reinforce the mythology which indirectly undermined efforts to achieve women's equality in the workforce.

At the same time as women were disadvantaged by their gender, organisations dedicated to working for women gave them support. However, the effect was limited by the basic ideology of groups such as the WSG which did not recognise the class based nature of women's oppression as readily as

the significance of gender.

Women's groups within the ALP, both branches and special women's organisations, gave women activists support to develop new ideas and challenge old ones within the general labour movement. The special women's section of Labor's *Westralian Worker* also gave women the opportunity to select their own material and foster new perspectives. After the war a practical asset for women was established through the appointment of the ALP Woman Organiser.

Despite social changes between the early 1900s and 1933 women's work remained limited to a small range of occupations with few promotional opportunities and little recognition of their right to equal pay. The perception that women had only a short term commitment to paid work remained, as did the belief that they had no responsibility for dependents and less than full responsibility for themselves.

Party political changes

In 1901 the first Labor members were elected to the state parliament. By 1904 the election of a further ten members gave the Party a short lived success in office. Labor then turned electoral adversity to advantage by undertaking a major reorganisation, in 1907 the Western Australia labour movement being described as the '...most integrated in the world'. [19]

It was this organisation which contributed to the landslide victory for the ALP in the state elections of 1911 followed by eight years of government until the Party split in 1916 over conscription. Until then, the labour movement was the beneficiary of a national Labor Government from 1911 to 1916, an improved *Industrial and Conciliation Act* and a *Workers' Compensation Act.*

The hallmark of the 1911 - 1916 Labor government was social improvement. [20] The ALP held office again from 1924 to 1930 and, although it did not control the Legislative Council, the *Workers Compensation Act*, the forty hour week

and preference to unionists in government employment were won. The 1925 *Industrial Arbitration Act* effected important changes. Amendments to the Act introduced the basic wage concept under which a review of the basic wage replaced independent agreements made in individual court hearings. Regulation of industries was undertaken, the method by which unions could approach the Arbitration Court was simplified and a full time President appointed. These changes emphasised reliance on the arbitration system, which in turn increased the significance of NSW and Victorian precedents in industrial legislation and procedure.

In this period federal anti-Labor governments were returned at each election, except for the short term Labor Government from 1929 to the electoral disaster of 1931 - and crisis for workers trying to maintain their standard of living in the Depression.

The 1930 Nationalist Party slogan, "Work for all", offered more than it could achieve and unemployment remained high over the next three years. Although an attempt to reduce disability compensation was thwarted, workers' conditions were undermined by changing the process under which the basic wage was considered. It was to be declared quarterly rather than annually, reducing the wage more quickly as wages were on a downward spiral. [21]

Despite a low profile and its cautious and moderate promises the ALP retained workers' support and was returned to government in 1933. However, Labor was unable to deal effectively with the Depression, workers were dispirited and industrial action was at a low ebb.

Whether Labor governments flourished or failed, women were part of the political process. They contributed to Labor's electoral successes and participated in policy formulation and as delegates to ALP District Councils and State Executive. From the early 1900s they were instrumental in founding Labor branches and were involved in unionising women's occupations. Women were present at the first Trades and Labour (TLC) Congress and debated women's role in the

workforce. By 1917 they were seasoned political operators with a history of participation in both wings of the labour movement and were accepted as important contributors.

However, tension in the labour movement, caused in part by antagonism between the coastal unions and those in the goldfields, and increased by the attempt to form a national union organisation, undermined the support women could garner in the organisation of their labour. Although State Labor governments may have been expected to assist in improving industrial relations women also had to fight hard on their own behalf. As a result of these conditions, in both state and national forums women had to fight conditions specific to women and conditions adversely affecting all workers.

Changing industrial conditions

As a significant part of the Western Australian population women took their place in a broad spectrum of activities in the labour market. They were workers, income earners, taxpayers and in many cases, breadwinners. They also fulfilled tasks traditionally considered women's work. Women workers had a real interest in organising their labour, concentrated as they were in jobs with low status, low income and low levels of independence.

The TLC was founded in 1892 to protect workers against exploitation and became part of the partnership of political and industrial interests formed in 1899 at the first TLC Congress. Members were predominantly male and they were committed to maintaining the family wage - in reality, a male breadwinners' wage.

Initially the Western Australian industrial environment was conducive to relatively calm industrial relations as middle class and working class interests were linked. However, this conviviality lapsed in 1893 under the influence of incoming radicals, known as "t'othersiders", from the eastern states. Although leaders generally disapproved strike action, preferring political intervention

as a solution to industrial problems, the burgeoning demands for workers' rights changed the industrial environment. This not only led to the founding of the political wing of the movement but fostered an atmosphere in which parliamentary politics and later, the introduction of arbitration, blossomed.

The first manifestation of Labor's political wing was the short lived Progressive Political League. A decline in trade unionism due to the goldrushes from 1893 to 1896 further increased the influence of politically orientated workers and the League was reformed and renamed the Political Labour Party. [22] Thus an organised group of workers dedicated to parliamentary action formed the basis for the resurgence of industrial organisation in the late 1890s.

Although the first unions, the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners and the Typographical Society, covered traditionally male occupations (as did most of the early unions) women followed suit by the late 1890s. In 1899 hotel and restaurant workers unionised and in the early 1900s shop assistants, tailoresses, bag, sack and textile workers and women in the tobacco industry organised.

Coastal unionisation was paralleled on the goldfields where miners were the initial beneficiaries. [23] Later, other workers, including women working as shop assistants, were unionised. [24] In the same period arbitration was established as a major force after it successfully effected settlement of the 1899 waterside workers strike. Union executives supported arbitration, confirming as it did, their role as the effective voice of the workers. The *Westralian Worker*, the official newspaper of the movement, began publication and the TLC was established as a major forum and a conciliation and arbitration Act was introduced. A further Arbitration Act, in 1902, 'set the seal of respectability' [25] on the organisation of labour.

This was established even more firmly by the introduction of the *Industrial Arbitration Act 1912* which

required the registration of all workers, regulation of industries, compulsory conferences and payment of a minimum wage, even if workers were on contract or undertaking piece work. [25]

Like the early movement in WA, eastern states workers had believed that employee and employer interests coincided. However, the 1890s strikes undermined this concept. In its place, a compulsory arbitration system developed and the *Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act 1904* was implemented. The 1908 Harvester Judgement consolidated the influence of the Arbitration Court. Many state unions federated in recognition that they needed national power in industrial matters in a national environment.

This was merely an ad hoc arrangement and discussions were begun in 1908 in which it was proposed that a national organisation should be formed to protect workers. The Federal Grand Council was founded in 1913, but was largely ineffective. Continued debate on the matter until the founding of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) in 1927 served to reinforce and reflect tensions in the WA Branch of the ALP.

Concurrent with trade unionists' desire for a national organisation was the Workers of the World support for the Syndicalist' proposal that the One Big Union (OBU) should be formed. In turn, the ALP sought to introduce this objective to its platform. Considered a radical innovation, partly aimed at undermining conservatives in the ALP, the Australian Workers Union (AWU), in particular, was dissatisfied with the ideology expressed through the political wing. The conscription crisis and divergent responses to the Russian Revolution increased divisions in the Party, eventually coalescing around the OBU proposal.

Matters came to a head when in 1921 the Trade Union Congress adopted the OBU objectives and obtained the support of the ALP executive for their inclusion in the party platform to replace the 1905 socialist objective. A Special Conference rejected the attempt, despite endorsement by the

ALP executive, relegating the Socialist Objective to a secondary status. The Council of Action, the national body established to replace the Grand Council, lost favour with the ALP with its nationalism and support of the White Australia Policy. [27] This reflected not only rank and file preference for a less radical approach but an important difference between representatives at a Labor Party conference and the Congress. The latter represented a wide range of unions whereas the ALP Conference was dominated by the AWU and parliamentarians. The Congress bowed to the ALP decisions eventually in support of a united labour movement.

The proposed national organisation of unionists foundered when the OBU was refused registration. In its place the largely ineffective Council of Action was formed to deal with interstate disputes. This resulted in the political wing of the labour movement (a federal organisation with largely independent state branches) retaining its position as the most important national organisation of labour. Workers were effectively without a strongly focussed national industrial organisation able to counter attacks made on working conditions during the 1920s. Where it had been introduced, the forty hour week was lost. In preparation for the 1925 election, the ALP Conference in 1924 played safe on industrial issues. The political reflection of this retreat was emphasised with the concurrent banning of communist sympathisers from the Party. [28]

The quest for a national organisation of labour continued. In 1925 trade union delegates from all states met and joined the Commonwealth Industrial Disputes Committee in yet another attempt to devise a method of handling interstate disputes. Its findings were to be binding on state disputes committees, but internal controversy over the Nationalist Government's proposed industrial legislation led to its eventual disintegration.

A successful strategy to equip workers with a national focus was not found until in 1927 when a determination to include all factions and interests led to the formation of

the ACTU. However, the fledgling organisation had to deal immediately with the consequences of the Depression, the fall of the Scullin Federal Government in 1931 and wages decreasing concurrently with lengthening working hours. [29]

Unions were forced into increasing industrial confrontation from a weak position. They were fighting to prevent a return to 1890s conditions (such as sweated labour) at the same time as endeavouring to maintain support for a continuation of the philosophy behind the 1920 Harvester Judgement. Under the Judgement Justice Henry Bourne Higgins stressed that workers were entitled to an 'opportunity for [time] for the things that make life worth living'. [30] However, this ideal increasingly became a dream as employers seeking to reduce production costs sought to undermine daily and weekly hiring of labour. By 1929 piece work was being urged upon the community as a solution to productivity problems. [31]

The ACTU had no option but to defend the Basic Wage which had been established in 1920. Attempts to have the Arbitration Court inquire into the concept, method of determination and the justice of the results failed. An argument based on the ability of the economy to pay, rather than on workers' needs (which the ACTU wished to argue) remained the basis of wage and salary determination.

As a result, the ACTU only narrowly survived an expression of no confidence. However, a proposal that workers should take direct action was defeated in 1934, demonstrating that workers maintained a belief in the ACTU, despite its perceived shortcomings. Although in 1937 a new Basic Wage Inquiry was undertaken it continued to be bogged down in debate over whether workers' needs or the ability of the economy to pay should be given priority. [32]

In this environment it is unlikely that women's special case would have been supported by the labour movement, wedded as it was to the family wage concept included in the Basic Wage. Women's needs were even less likely to be considered in an arbitration system even more firmly

committed to economic conservatism.

However, between 1917 and the Depression women in the Western Australian labour movement attempted to make industrial gains. Many had been involved in political activity prior to 1917. Some had been activists in NSW and Victoria and others participated in the suffrage movement in the 1890s. These long term political activists worked with Labor women who had been effective Party workers for political, economic and industrial justice from the time that party politics became an important part of the political milieu in WA.

Although it is not readily recognised that women's membership of unions was significant in the period, the industries in which women worked contributed to a steady strengthening of union membership throughout the 1900s and by the 1920s at least one union, the Hotel, Club, Caterers, Tearooms, Restaurant Industrial Union of Workers (HCCTRIUW) was industrially quite powerful. Although women were less effective in gaining recognition of their breadwinner status (despite the statistics which supported their claim) women's determination to achieve their industrial objectives strengthened the recognition that women were indeed in the Western Australian workforce. It was only their lack of legitimacy, based on society's refusal to see them as breadwinners that undermined women's attempts to maintain their position when the Depression lead to their being singled out as less entitled to paid work than men.

NOTES

1. Henry, Alice "A socialism of the heart", *The Daily Socialist*, first issue, 1906.

2. Seventh Census of W.A. taken for the night of 31 March 1901, reported in Ross, Williamina M. "Votes for Women" in *The Western Australian Historical Society*, Perth, pp44 - 53.

3. *The Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, 1911.

4. *The Census of The Commonwealth of Australia*, 1921.

5. *The Census of the Commonwealth of Australia 1911*, 1921 and 1933.

6. Crowley, F.K. and de Garis B.K. *A Short History of Western Australia*, Macmillan, 1969, pp66-71.

7. See Snooks, G.D. "Development in Adversity" in Stannage, C.T. ed., *A New History of Western Australia*, University of Western Australia Press, Perth, 1979 for an explanation which shows that although there are some problems in using these figures (the only ones available) they are useful indicators of the situation in the unionised labour force.

8. "Labor's Unique Record", typescript, ALP Papers, Battye Library, Perth, 1930.

9. Snooks, *op.cit.*, p257.

10. Crowley and de Garis, *op.cit.* Pp 66 - 71.

11. Mrs E.D. Cowan at the opening of Seaforth School for Mentally Deficient Boys, 1926, quoted in "Labor's Unique Record", op.cit.

12. "Four-and-a-half Years of Labour Government", typescript ALP Papers, 1916.

13. Department of Labour, Industrial Hygiene Meeting Minutes, 2516/24, Battye Library.

14. Department of Labour, Industrial Hygiene Meeting Minutes, op.cit.

15. ibid.

16. Department of Labour, Egg Pulping and Packing, General Requirements for Exemption under Section 37, 2075/30.

17. The *West Australian*, 31 August 1936.

18. The *West Australian*, 11 June 1914.

19. *ibid.*

20. Panton, A.H., "Political History of the A.L.P. of W.A.", typescript, ALP Papers.

21. ibid.

22. vanden Driesen, I. H. "The evolution of the trade union movement in Western Australia" in Stannage *op. cit.* pp356 - 362.

23. *ibid.*

24. Joyce, Robin R., op. cit. 1979.

25. de Garis, Brian "Self Government and the emergence of the political party system 1891 - 1911" in Stannage, *op. cit.*

26. Typescript, "Four-and-a-half Years of Labour Government", op. cit.

27. Hagan, Jim *The History of the ACTU*, Longman Cheshire, 1981, pp13 - 23.

28. *ibid.* p31.

29. *ibid.* p46.

30. *ibid.* P31.

31. *ibid.* p30.

32. *ibid.* p139.

CHAPTER 3
WOMEN'S BATTLE FOR EQUALITY: EARLY BEGINNINGS

> Some women were concerned at first that independent women's branches could mean the separating of the sexes in thoughts and ideas. Others were of the firm opinion that through lack of opportunity women generally had not acquired the necessary knowledge and were not sufficiently interested in industrial, political and social questions to record their vote to advantage.
>
> Jean Beadle, 1915

> Can a woman run a home and carry on her own career? - certainly she can - why not? In these days of labor-saving appliances and conveniences a woman must have some interest outside the home, or she gets narrow in her outlook. It is not as it was in our mothers' days when everything had to be done by hand. Outside interests broaden the woman's mind, and there is no reason why she should be less fond of her home, or less interested in it.
>
> Mrs Vallance, WSG, 1933

> Some women are meant for home builders and nothing else; they are engrossed in home occupations, and they are doing a very valuable work: but for women who are able to look a little farther, there is so much to be done that I think every woman should avail herself, as far as possible, of the modern labor-saving things, so as to leave her free to help in the problems of today, whether in a profession or doing what she can in improving conditions generally.
>
> Jean Beadle, 1933

Enfranchised by the happy conjunction of women's demand and political expediency Western Australian women won the vote in 1899. Women's challenge to the assumption that the male head of household should be the single repository of political opinion and power undermined the status quo. But there were further battles to win, including winning acknowledgment and financial recognition that in many households there was no male head, no male breadwinner. Women organised to undertake this task, determined to raise the status of female roles in economic rather than mythmaking terms.

Political party allegiances

In the fluid political climate of the early 1900s the aligning of women from different classes does not seem strange. However, the continuation of women's homogeneous approach to women's problems is significant. Between 1907 and 1910 the political situation changed and closely knit Nationalist (later to become the Liberal Party) and Labor parties formed. Although divisions occurred in the movements at first, members did not reject their basic ideology. The Nationalist Party identified itself with progress, the ALP with social justice.

In the same years some women identified with the party of their choice. Others, rejecting the divisions they felt were caused by party politics, founded organisations on a non-party platform. They provided an umbrella from 1909 for women of different political persuasions to meet and pursue their objectives. Between 1905 and 1916, the most influential politically uncommitted organisations were the WSG and the National Council of Women (NCW). The Labor women's branches and organisations and women trade unionists provided a forum for women dedicated to the labour movement.

Western Australian women read widely, were outward looking and eager to hear from national and international women. As a result, the extent to which the women in the

women's organisations, party and non-party, were influenced by feminist ideology was profound. They found large areas of agreement on issues which affected women in particular and, although embracing the motherhood mythology, acted to extend the occupations available to women rather than allowing the myth to limit them. Labor women were socialists who radicalised the approaches to issues promoted by other women's groups. At times their commitment to general working class aims deflected them from their work in women's organisations but they also determined that women should not be discriminated against because of their gender.

Labor women were the first to organise, [1] building on their experience in political movements before coming to WA, union activity or in the suffrage movement. They began as early as 1902 and a meeting aimed at formalising their activities was held in 1904. However, the real period of growth in terms of numbers, continuity of meetings and activity, occurred from 1905. At the same time the ALP established itself, with women's and mixed branches growing side by side. [2]

Not realising that women's and men's aims could at times differ, some women were concerned at first that independent women's branches would promote differences with negative consequences. [3] Others believed that women's lack of opportunity to learn about industrial, political and social questions inhibited them from casting an informed vote. [4]

The first permanent women's branch was founded on the coast at Fremantle after a public meeting had been held to promote women's membership of the ALP. Women distributed pamphlets, combining two objectives: they publicised the meeting and they approached other women on a personal level on behalf of the Party. As a result of this effort the Women's Political and Social Crusade (WPSC) was successfully begun on October 6 1905. It was later re-named the Fremantle Women's Branch of the ALP. Amongst its objectives were the improvement of factory legislation, more effective

administration of industrial laws and the study of industrial legislation - the first formal move the ALP women made toward improving women's working conditions, outside the unions.

From 1907 women's branches were founded outside the metropolitan area. The Eastern Goldfields Women's Political Labor League (EGWPLL) started with ten members. Although the audience was comprised largely of men, Beadle and Mrs Jessie Johnson as the organisers, were able to persuade those women present also to become involved. These leaders were helped in their organisation by union members and Julian Stuart, editor of the *Westralian Worker*. They were given free space for reports and advertisements and Florence Stuart, a member, later used her column under the pen name of "Hypatia", to publicise women's issues.

Success was almost immediate, membership of the League rising to ninety-one within six months and by 1908 to one hundred and five. [5] The women were involved in political, feminist and public-spirited activities. Their first work was to update the electoral rolls which involved them in public political activity in preparation for the elections. They also began fundraising for the labour movement in general, and for workers on strike. The EGWPLL affiliated with the Goldfields Political Labor Council in July 1907, becoming a formal part of the labour movement while maintaining their independence.

Between 1907 and 1911 branches were formed by women as far afield as Kanowna, Brownhill, Coolgardie and Menzies in the goldfields area, in the wheatbelt at Northam, in the south-west of the state in Woolgar Sound and Bunbury and on the coast in Geraldton. The conditions under which some of these branches started show the women's determination, on the part of the leaders and the led, to become involved in politics on women's terms. Sixteen women and one man went from Coolgardie to Kalgoorlie to form a branch in 1907. The Menzies Branch was begun after Beadle spent a week at in the district electioneering. Thirty women were present at the

founding meeting in spite of the heat, a violent dust storm and the considerable distance some had to travel by traps and buggies. [6] In 1911 an additional four country branches were formed. [7]

Expansion also occurred in the metropolitan area. By 1908 branches had been established at Midland, Guildford, West Guildford, Maylands, Subiaco, Balcatta, Fremantle, Perth and North Perth. [8] The Labor Women's Social Club (the word 'Social' being dropped from the title in 1912 as it was considered a misnomer for an organisation which was far more than a social club) began in Perth in 1911. The Eastern Goldfield's Women's Club and The Women's Effort, a suburban based group, were organised for the purpose of fundraising, although this was not exclusive to these groups.

At times women's joint membership of political branches and fund-raising responsibilities conflicted - resulting in neglect of political activity. For example, in 1913 Perth Labor women were so busy organising a bazaar to fund raise for the *Labor Daily* that they postponed unionising laundry workers. At the same time as the women's right to make decisions about their priorities was recognised [9] it also demonstrates that they could be deflected from improving women's working conditions to working for the labour movement as a whole - to the detriment of women workers.

However, unionising women's occupations and the organisation of an Eight Hours League in 1909, together with their interest in industrial legislation and connection with militant women unionists, indicate that Labor women were more than auxiliaries fulfilling traditionally female roles for male members of the labour movement.

Women's branches, often set up side by side with existing mixed membership branches, worked to ensure that women's votes were used to Labor's advantage, the women referring to their activities as 'defence not defiance'. [10] Labor women's pursuit of the women's cause culminated in their organisation of conferences to bring women's branch

and union women delegates together to debate and promote policies to meet women's needs. [11]

The first of these major conferences was feminist in its essentials in that recognition was given to the discrimination suffered by women and development of policies aimed at overcoming this. Although a Women's Conference (embracing women's organisations as well as Labor women's representatives) was held in 1914 the 1912 First Labor Women's Conference had set the pace for the philosophy which was to prevail until the 1920s. It was fortunate that this foundation was established as the war years marked a period in which women's organisations were weakened through ideological and personal conflict. The additional bright aspect of these years was the appointment in 1918 of the Woman Organiser - a direct outcome of the 1912 conference.

The First Labor Women's Conference

The First Labor Women's Conference was held in the Perth Trades Hall for seven days in 1912. Sixty delegates represented thirty-five organisations and branches from suburban, goldfields, northern and southern branches and trade unions. Some of the more distant branches represented were Whim Creek, Roebourne, Carnarvon, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Murchison, Northam and Kalamunda. Trade union delegates from the South-West Clothing Trades Union, Club and Caterers' Union and Barmaids and Barmen Union brought ALP women together with union women. [12]

The Conference was an important landmark. Although motions from Labor women's organisations had been brought forward to Councils and then to State Executive and Conferences in the past, the Women's Conference dramatised the issues through press coverage while developing policy. [13]

At the same time, the results highlight the possibility that at times women's particular interests were submerged in support for the general aims of the labour movement. At this

stage the women had not faced the possibility that these aims (although couched in terms which assumed their benefit for both sexes were in reality those which supported men) sometimes disadvantaged women.

Some of the arguments made at the conference reflect the influence of the motherhood mythology which had earlier been used to support women's voting rights. In arguing for women's right to take their place in parliament and other public bodies such as municipal councils, boards and licensing benches one woman moved that women should not be involved because of their role in bearing children and moulding the future and character of the child. Another contended that women were temperamentally unsuited to sitting in parliament. The motion was lost by a large majority, on the grounds that women's presence was logical and necessary. [14]

Significantly, in terms of the Labor women's concern with women's work, a delegate claimed that lack of reform in women's occupations outside the home made it necessary to elect women legislators. Others suggested that such women could pay for domestic work as those who became parliamentarians would be salaried workers. [15]

Conflict with the women's ultimate aim of sexual equality was raised in relation to a motion favouring discrimination for women on the Children's Court. A delegate objected to the notion that only women should hold this position because the Labor women supported equality in every position. Those opposed argued that women had special qualities that, because of their sex, suited them for particular occupations. [16]

Equal pay was debated when it was raised in two motions. The fifth to be carried at conference, 'That the equality of employment and wage be persistently advocated for men and women, practised in our own labour unions' business transactions', [17] suggests that the women were unrepentant in their demands for their own kind, despite the criticism aimed at the movement, and the Labor Federal

Government which had already observed the principle of equal pay. Each resolution was carried and the State Government was requested to have the provisions placed on the Statute Book.

Fair economic return was the general aim of the labour movement and this underlay the debate at the Women's Conference. Labor women applied the concept to women's occupations both inside and outside the home when they added a demand for economic recognition of women's nurture of children. The maternity grant was introduced later in 1912 by the Fisher Labor Government.

Successful resolutions did not always influence the wider labour movement. Mamie Swanton, representing the Tailoresses Union, highlighted the inequality women sometimes faced in the organisations developed to protect workers. Her motion that women should participate in all decisions on union expenditure motion was ruled out of order at the Metropolitan Council, not long after the Conference. [18] On the other side of the equation, women were often delegates to the Councils from unions, even where male membership was higher than that of women [19] and were treated as equals in other Council business. [20]

The influence of feminist ideology from the nineties' suffrage movement is apparent. Women brought the arguments of justice and moral influence to bear on the issues they discussed. Also carried over was an awareness that women were conditioned to limit their activities. This realisation did not prevent them from seeking responsibilities and rights, such as questioning the myth that breadwinners were male. They assumed the right to enter non-domestic occupations without discrimination against them on the grounds of gender.

A radical alliance

Women in WA traditionally worked together, providing the foundation for women's collaboration on achieving benefits for women. Although some of the organisations were

clearly conservative, it is clear that they were formed to enhance women's equality as interpreted by women activists. Women organised as early as the 1870s, forming the Mother's Union, the Girl's Friendly Society, the Ministering Children's League and the St George's Reading Circle. Members of these groups joined the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the Karrakatta Club (KC) in the 1890s and the Labor Women's Organisations (LWO), the Women's Service Guild (WSG) and the National Council of Women (NCW) in the early 1900s.

The WCTU and the KC publicised women's suffrage, arousing a high level of public interest in the cause. [21] The KC comprised women of some status in Western Australia society, and as such, they were able to promote their ideas at an influential level. The WCTU moved more directly into political agitation, forming branches and a state union, holding public meetings and, at one time, approaching the Government with a petition demanding women's suffrage. This was unsuccessful and the WCTU decided to rely on publicity and questioning parliamentary and municipal candidates on their support for suffrage - a procedure undertaken in the early 1970s by WEL, still battling for women's equality.

Head of the WCTU's Suffrage Department, Mrs Jeanette Foulkes, believed that women were conditioned to take a limited role in society because they lacked responsibility and intellectual interests. This philosophy, recognising as it did women's need to be given responsibility, or failing that, to take it, was influential amongst the women fighting these early battles. When they debated full citizenship rights in 1918 Labor women used the argument that giving responsibility to women would beget responsible women.

The divisions which were to emerge between women in later battles for equality were highlighted by the WCTU's increasing emphasis on quiet, persistent and unobtrusive influence [22] and the more confrontationist approach of the Women's Political and Suffrage League (WPSL). The League was formed in 1896, its membership including women from

establishment and working class backgrounds and active Labor women. They proposed to agitate directly for the vote.

Some of the arguments supporting women's suffrage demonstrate the women's belief in the mythology which undermined their demand for equality. The WCTU made two arguments for women's suffrage: that it promoted political justice and that the community would be morally improved by women's voting into parliament moral men. It was argued that society was like a family in which good legislators could play the part the women took in the home - demonstrating that women were not immune from the ideology supporting the view that women's domestic role should be defined in moral terms. This in turn led to mythologising about motherhood promoting the belief that community standards could be raised, as were those in the home, by a moral presence. [23] Women battling for the vote did not realise that their support for this mythology was to be instrumental in separating women's occupations from men's on gender lines. In addition, women were disadvantaged by their supposed moral superiority as women's domestic role was admired in theory but denigrated in terms of economic fact and real status. This discrimination then flowed over into women's occupations outside the home. The problems engendered by these ideas became part of the problem women's organisations had to deal with after the vote was won.

Despite strong and lengthy co-operation between the women from the early 1900s, two strands of feminism developed in this period, eventually resulting in conflict between radical feminists and feminists in 1916. Labor women were not immune to these conflicts, which were embryonic in debates at the 1912 First Labor Women's Conference. However, the non-party organisations' concentration on practical issues led to women working together effectively until 1916 and less effectively, but still together, thereafter.

In 1909 the WSG was founded in a superficially conservative atmosphere. Lady James, wife of the Governor, chaired the first meeting at Government House and Cowan,

representing the Children's Protection Society, spoke on behalf of the new organisation. The platform was dedicated to women and children's needs and included supporting humanitarian movements (from a women's and children's perspective); full citizenship rights for women; education for women on moral, social and economic questions and loyalty to the Empire. [24]

The possibility that an emphasis on the non-party aspect of the WSG was a device to protect conservatism was at odds with the concerted effort to gather together women from all political persuasions. [25] These efforts were successful - membership was diverse and generally representative of WA women's organisations. Thirty-six founding members included those from such diverse backgrounds as Mrs W.D. Holmes from the Ministering Children's League, Bessie Rischbieth, a wealthy member of the establishment; Labor women, Madge Cort, Mrs J. Dodd and Frances Ruffy-Hill; Cowan from the Children's Protection Society; the KC's representative, Dr Roberta Jull; and Jeanette Foulkes from the WCTU. [26]

The WSG was invited to become the WA Branch of the NCW but refused on the grounds that it was too conservative. In 1911 the NCW was eventually founded in WA, conservative women again leading the way. Seeking to emulate the success of the WSG, perhaps in reaction to that organisation's refusal to become the WA Branch of the Australia-wide NCW, the Council also emphasised its non-party platform. Organisations such as the Australian Natives Association, the Children's Protection Society, the Ministering Children's League, the KC and church groups affiliated. [27]

Lady Edeline Strickland, wife of the new Governor, who had been behind the efforts to use the established organisation of the WSG, became President. Her overtures to the Labor women's organisations to provide founding members were rejected on the advice of ALP member, Florence Stuart. [28] However, the Council was successful in attracting ALP members as delegates from other organisations and the WSG

affiliated early in the formation of the NCW. Although the Labor women's organisations did not join until 1913, ALP women were members of the first committee.

Strickland's presidency of the NCW established the pattern for future Governors' wives to take on the position, until 1916 when Cowan won the position. With such conservative representation in the most prestigious organisational role it was not surprising that the Council's attitude toward women's issues was one of amelioration of wrongs rather than a demand for radical change.

Members tended toward a belief that women's place was in the home. [29] Although they recognised that women "forced" into other occupations should not be exploited, their most radical stances in the early years concerned women's right to university education, and places on the University of Western Australia Senate and hospital boards. [30] The ALP had supported women's appointment to hospital boards in 1912 as a consequence of lobbying by the Labor women from 1906. The aim was endorsed by the WSG from 1909. When Rischbieth, Cowan and Mrs J.B. Holman were appointed to the Perth Public Hospital Board the first step was accomplished through the combined efforts of WA women. [31]

In 1912 the NCW established committees to discuss suffrage and full citizenship rights, education, the international press, finance, peace and arbitration, the legal position of women, equal standards, traffic in women, migration and public health. These seem to have achieved little in practical terms: the Council's central interest was in woman in her family role.

As a consequence, Labor women found it easier to work with such organisations on issues related to women's more traditional activities. Most successful was the fight for what was to become King Edward Memorial Hospital (KEMH): an independent maternity facility. Although the Labor women were the first to agitate for the hospital it took the weight of the combined women's organisations to achieve their purpose. Even in this traditional field women worked

together to promote radical approaches to moral dilemmas when they ensured that the hospital would be open to unmarried women as well as the married women to whom the hospital was initially to be open.

The conditions under which this proposal was overturned were intimidating. In 1910 Strickland presided over the meeting called to discuss the establishment of the hospital. Held at Government House, the meeting was addressed by the Premier and Bishop Riley. Despite the conservative atmosphere, Ruffy-Hill and Cort proposed that both unmarried and married women should have access to the hospital and refused to accede to a request to withdraw.

Doctors were divided on the subject, as was the ALP. For instance, Mr W.D. Johnson disagreed with the amendment and the seconder of the motion advised waiting before legislating for such approval. The amendment was put, despite the vacillation, and carried by an overwhelming majority.

Six years of agitation followed. [32] However, the women were optimistic and in May 1910 a fund-raising meeting was held. In addition, a deputation approached the Government for financial assistance. Land and a grant were offered. However, by 1915 no more had been done. Further evasions resulted, and it was proposed by the Labor Government that a wing should be added to the Royal Perth hospital until metropolitan growth justified a review of the situation.

Rather than acceptance, this suggestion only increased the organisations' activity - a public protest was held, bringing together Beadle, Cowan and Rischbieth on the same platform, fighting for the same cause. The 1910 committee had by this stage decided upon a name for the hospital and raised 900 pounds. It was decided that the pressure on the Government should be maintained: a fortuitous decision as the Minister for Health recapitulated and serious planning for KEMH was begun. It was built in Subiaco, a suburb of Perth, and completed in 1916 - a worthy example of women

from the ALP and conservative women's organisations adopting women's concerns and bringing them to fruition. [33]

The issue was important in two respects: it was a major success in that women's needs were recognised in spite of the need for great public expenditure and it was the first time that Labor women had combined with other feminists to publicly reject official Labor policy. The Advisory Committee to the hospital was a tribute to the major women's groups involved as it included Beadle and Mrs Jabez Dodd, members of all three; and Cowan, member of the WSG and NCW. [34]

Although the women worked together on this issue party loyalties were not completely forgotten. In response to a letter to the *Western Australian* complaining about the Labor Government's lack of action on the hospital, Mrs Julian Stuart defended the Labor Government and criticised the notion that women could work more effectively through a non-party organisation. While acknowledging the importance of working with non-party groups, Stuart was also alert to the Government's problems in getting legislation through the conservative dominated upper house. [35]

Another focus was the attempt to improve women's career prospects. In 1913 the WSG approached the Labor women requesting support for their proposal that the University of Western Australia should include what was referred to as a domestic economy course. The women's proposal demonstrates their aim to raise the status of women's work through their association with general university level courses. They based this approach on an interpretation of the conduct of a New Zealand course where it appeared that domestic economy was part of the Bachelor of Science. [36] There appears to have been no follow up to these discussions, possibly because the women's efforts were diverted through activities associated with World War 1.

The war had a dramatic effect on women's successful collaboration which was brought to a temporary halt when controversy erupted in the ALP over conscription. The

debacle split the women's ranks also. For eleven years Labor women had acted as women primarily seeking social justice for women. In 1916 they were forced to choose between this aim and their support for contending groups in a party splitting over military conscription.

Beadle had already expressed criticism of the Labor Women's Club for what she considered defection from women's interests to work for the Red Cross to the exclusion of these long term aims [37] and her collection of clippings publicising the anti-case [38] demonstrate her concerns on the issue. Conscription dramatised the dissension between pacifist women and those who supported the principle of Australia's involvement in the war.

Cowan, who in the same period became embroiled controversy of a personal as well as political nature in the WSG and NCW, was also heavily involved in the Red Cross Centre and other fundraising activities on behalf of the war effort. [39] It seems likely in these circumstances that the conscription issue also played a part in disaffection between herself and some of the Labor women.

In general the conscription issue depressed activity and created disunity in the labour movement. [40] Such dislocation manifested itself in growing proportions in the Labor women's organisations. In 1916 at least one women's branch disbanded over conscription: the President of the Burswood-Belmont Branch, Miss Boulter, was ejected on the basis of her support for Scadden. This branch was reformed, but as a mixed branch under male leadership. Boulter's attempt to establish another women's branch was a failure as its membership was small, and from outside the area. [41]

Mixed branches were weakened by the battle over conscription and other women's branches must have shared the Burswood-Belmont Branch experience. One result of the changed direction in women's energies was the complete absence of further women's conferences between 1914 and 1929. In the opening speech at the 1929 Women's Conference this was commented upon by Mr J.J. Keneally. In welcoming

Beadle, as in 1912 in the chair, deplored the length of time between conferences which had led to a corresponding decline in understanding between men and women in the movement. [42]

Internal ALP tensions were not the only conflicts to undermine the foundations of Western Australian women's work. Dissension between the supporters of radical feminism and ameliorative action, exemplified by the withdrawal of the WSG from the NCW, emerged in this period. The wariness expressed by the WSG towards the early overtures from the NCW remained, increasing when Cowan became President of the NCW.

Matters came to a head with the WSG's proposal to hold a Child Welfare Conference in 1916. The WSG organised the conference and invited delegates from other organisations to attend. One of these was the NCW. At its meeting held on 21 October 1916 members of the affiliate organisations held a spirited debate on the right of the WSG to proceed with the initiative. Rischbieth and Cowan were the main protagonists in personal as well as ideological terms. [43]

Rischbieth was concerned about what she believed was Cowan's propaganda on behalf of the Nationalist Party and attempts to control the women's organisational activities.

Cowan's presidency also changed the nature of the position. Its previous leadership by Governors' wives gave the organisation at least the semblance of apolitical status. Each of the former appointees had respected the non-party nature of the position and the organisation. Cowan, while politicising the position in appearance if not in intent, argued that all women's projects should be brought to the NCW to proceed only with its approval. After a fierce debate the WSG, WCTU, the Kindergarten Union and the LWO withdrew from formal ties with the NCW. [44] The *West Australian* [45] publicised the rift, undermining the value given to women's political work on their own behalf.

However, although these tensions should not be underestimated, women maintained some links. For example, the *Westralian Worker* on 25 October 1918 reported that the

WA Organisation of Labor Women had taken their demands for reform in women and young peoples' employment to the Colonial Secretary. They formed a deputation with the support of representatives from the NCW and were introduced by Mr W.C.Angwin MLA. The Labor women included Beadle, Hooten, Ruffy-Hill and Miss Cavanagh, with Cowan, Mrs Rutter and Mrs Juleff speaking on behalf of the NCW.

As can be seen from the topics taken up by the deputation the women were united on major industrial concerns, a significant change from the concerns adopted in the women's organisation's early manifestations. Sweating, the absence of lunch and changing facilities in workplaces and consequent poor sanitary conditions, as well as the contracting out of work leading to extremely low wages were of concern. They requested immediate improvements to existing conditions and changes to attain their long term aims of industrial fairness based on legislation.

Proposed legislation covered health, safety and general improvements. In addition, Hooten made a case for issuing health and fitness certificates to children before they could be employed in particular classes of work. She claimed that the girls became "physical wrecks" based on her observations during an award application in the Arbitration Court. To ensure that girls were adequately protected she asked that factories be inspected monthly and that equal numbers of men and women should be employed as Factory Inspectors.

Beadle threw her weight behind four issues in particular. Recognising that out workers would not be protected unless they were covered by awards that applied to factories, she suggested that the number of workers to constitute a factory should be lowered from six to two and that outworkers should be registered through amendments to the Arbitration Act. She also sought immediate improvements which could be more promptly effected: the compulsory provision of lunch and changing rooms and compulsory notification of overtime.

Ruffy-Hill gave special attention to safety issues, advocating that where machinery was used workers should be prohibited from wearing unsafe clothing and should have their hair tied back. This request was, however, at variance with that of the workers, some of whom took industrial action against such a ruling in 1924.

Cavanagh also suggested that changes should be made to the Arbitration Act, claiming that a rest period in the mornings and afternoons should be provided in the Act.

Although the *Westralian Worker* covered the Labor women's activities in detail and noted only that the NCW representatives spoke in support of the proposals, this could have been the outcome of its Labor credentials which would naturally focus on ALP women. The Government was reported as sympathetic and, although the proposed changes were seen as controversial, the carriage of an amending Health Act including some of them appeared to auger well for the future of progressive changes in industrial legislation.

Industrial issues were again focussed on in 1919 and 1920 when Labor women were joined by representatives from the WSG and NCW in deputations to the Nationalist Premier over women's wages. A lecture on the Factory Act was also organised. The meeting resolved that the NCW should co-operate with the LWO to arrange a delegation to the Colonial Secretary on the matter. [46] In the same period women approached the Colonial Secretary in an effort amend the Arbitration Act to enable domestic workers to use the Court. The Council's primary objective was, unlike that of the Labor women, to raise the standard of the home. [47] However, a side effect was to draw domestic work into the public sphere of organised labour.

This activity is significant when it is considered that Cowan, President of the Council, became an endorsed Nationalist candidate in 1921. [48] It is possible that one was a consequence of the other, or at least Cowan's activities had an influence on her being seen as a valid figure for political support.

After her endorsement Cowan gave less attention to industrial issues. Although she remained a force on the political scene she appears to have had little to do with the Labor women after the early 1920s, concentrating on legal matters in Parliament. In 1927 she supported the introduction of a woman probation officer to assist with female delinquents [49] and worked to obtain parity of punishment for attacks (such as indecent assault) on women and men. [50] She was also instrumental in opening the Speaker's Gallery in the State Parliament to women, introduced the Women's Legal Status Act, and proposed an amendment to the Administration Act so as to ensure parents' equal status when their child died intestate. [51]

The convergence of women's aims, as in the fight for KEMH, often superseded party politics. However, although individual Labor women such as Ruffy-Hill, Dodd, Beadle, Casson and Mrs Mellows remained in the NCW in 1920 [52] Labor women were thwarted by conservative women's control of the organisations which had been an integral part of women's activity on behalf of women.

Where this did not happen, such organisations were damaged to the extent that their ability to take radical action was impaired. The break in the women's movement left ALP women with little choice other than to work with the NCW, [53] the only women's organisation with national links, at a time when World War 1 had permanently extended the influence of the federal government.

The ALP was even less likely to serve as a natural alternative for pursuing women's aims at the national level. After the war the labour movement generally became more conservative, possibly as a reaction to the problems of 1916 - 1917 and the aftermath of the Russian Revolution. For instance, proposals from the NSW Annual Peace Conference commending peace and the Revolution were received by the WA Parliamentary Labor Party but not accepted. Many Labor branches, women's branches included, had sent delegates to the Peace Conference. However, none were sent from WA as the

local branch did not want to commit itself until the Federal Labor Congress pronounced on the issue. [54]

Association with the Revolution and its Australian supporters were considered an electoral liability as Australian society increasingly identified with middle class values. The ALP, which in the early 1900s had identified itself with socialism, became increasingly less responsive to its women members' aims. So, although Labor women were catalysts within the less radical women's movements and encouraged them to take action on behalf of women aimed at social justice, this action was specific and based on the amelioration of specific injustices. The organisations provided no arena in which the concepts of class warfare could effectively be discussed. The non-party platforms on which the organisations were so strongly based stifled deep social inquiry into the causes of the very injustices they were seeking to remedy.

Women continued to fight for women's representation on boards [55] - a request reiterated in 1941. [56] In addition, their major achievement in terms of caring for women's traditional interests as a group of politically diverse activists, the establishment of KEMH, remained a political meeting point. For example, various women's organisations took part in a fundraising croquet carnival in 1930. [57] Holman also worked as a front person for WSG representations on women's issues to the Premier in 1929. [58]

Radical issues, although not gender based, were also pursued. For instance, in 1932 Swanton's request that she be cremated upon her death resulted in public controversy. Conservative women worked on this radical woman's behalf. The WSG, through its representation on the Cemetery Board, moved to establish a crematorium and their contribution to the debate was effective in forcing the Government to meet their demand.

The value of motherhood continued to be extolled, often being depicted as the most important work a woman could undertake. The ramifications for nurturing professions such

as nursing and teaching were complex. For example, efforts to professionalise women's occupations, such as registering maternity nurses, raised the status of women's work as well as improving care for women in their traditional role as mothers. Traditional nurturing concerns also combined with industrial matters in the teaching profession, complicating matters for women teachers.

Class as well as gender issues added to the complexity as it was teaching to which the children of the blue collar worker covered in the major part of this thesis often aspired. Debates about professional status took place amongst female teachers, supporting the contention that women's industrial interests did not always converge around gender. Conflicts in the female dominated SSTUWA and the SATU [59] reflected the concerns which affected women in the male dominated labour movement.

Members of the unions were exercised about whether to separate women's and men's industrial interests or work together on the basis of political ideology. Other areas in which women were divided were status of primary versus high school teachers and immediate and long term aims. Personal conflicts also arose. However, it can only be a matter of speculation as to whether these or ideology were the main reasons for rifts. It is likely that the ambitions of female protagonists were no less important in the resolution of conflict than those of men in similar situations.

Although teachers also worked on a broad front for women's professional achievements, they also replicated the efforts made by non-party, non-union organisations such as the NCW which had supported the establishment of domestic science as a university course as early as 1917. [60]

In defending their right to a profession they emphasised the special sphere in which women might be expected to excel: Home Management. Together with the Kindergarten Union they saw the nurturing and domestic role of women as natural to their sex and believed that this should be institutionalised in the types of work for which

they were deemed to be ideally suited. [61]

The Home Management Committee of the SSTUWA is a prime example of a union following up on these efforts. They achieved professional status for the teaching of domestic science (at that time exclusive to girls) through nomenclature and study at university level. The Diploma of Domestic Science offered at Perth Technical College was designed to include the "chemistry" of foods (one third of the course) to fulfil the requirements of the Class 1 Certificate. This paralleled the A Certificate for teachers and, in this case, was followed by a thesis and practical project. In addition, teachers required passes in English units at university, or as required in the Teachers' Training Syllabus. [62]

Women teachers, like those in other occupations, were also keen to be paid equally with men. As with the women who worked through blue collar unions, women teachers made representations for improved salaries and working conditions as early as 1920. When they were refused, the SSTUWA took industrial action. Although some female teachers did not strike on behalf of the demand, respect for authority did not sit well with significant numbers of teachers, many of whom were union members or supported their work. [63]

Professional women's calls for equal pay were no more successful than those made female factory workers. Like them, women depended on their male, as well as female, colleagues. For instance, Dorothy Threlfell, appointed in 1954 as the first Women's Warden, recalls that her resolution on equal pay was supported by Arthur Hartley, rather than another woman. She claims that she received little support from the other women and men voted for the resolution at conference. [64]

Women who worked as "sisters", although never using the term, were indeed close companions on a number of controversial matters. Their sisterhood at times circumvented their party affiliations, class connections and relationships with men in WA. Where the strains imposed by

alternative demands were too great this sisterhood was fractured. However, resilience appears to have been a strong feature of the women's activism in the early 1900s through to the 1930s as it is in the 1990s.

NOTES

1. Jean Beadle was the most important activist in this period and details of her contribution are at Chapter 8.

2. Joyce, op. cit. 1979.

3. Beadle, Jean "Notes on the formation of the Labor Women's Movement in Western Australia", 1915, Evelyn Wood Papers.

4. ibid.

5. The *West Australian* 27/3/1908.

6. The *Coolgardie Miner*, 25/3/1907 and The *Westralian Worker*, 20/11/1908.

7. Un-named newspaper clipping, 29/9/1911, Evelyn Wood Papers.

8. The *Westralian Worker*, 10/4/1908.

9. Metropolitan Council Minutes, 4/11/1913 and 24/2/1914.

10. Eastern Goldfields Women's Labor League Meeting Report, 28/12/1906, Evelyn Wood Papers.

11. Beadle, "Women's Labor Movement", Evelyn Wood Papers and the *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 10/9/1910.

12. *The First Labor Women's Conference Minutes*, Westralian Worker Press, Perth, 1912, in the possession of Robin Joyce.

13. Beadle (using the name Jeanette), "Women's Labor Movement. Life and Work in Western Australia", The *Westralian Worker*, c1915, un-dated paper clipping, Evelyn Wood Papers.

14. The First Labor Women's Conference, op. cit.

15. Mrs C.H. Manning, women's councils and committee member, 1933.

16. ibid.

17. *The First Labor Women's Conference Minutes, op. cit.*, Pp 4 - 5.

18. Metropolitan Council Minute Book, 21/3/1912 and 28/3/1912.

19. Metropolitan Council Minute Book, ibid.

20. ibid. and, for instance, Swanton's nomination for State Executive 23/5/1912; Swanton's presence on a committee of three elected to consider amendments to the Shop and Factory Act 19/11/1912; Swanton's membership of a committee of seven elected to revise Rules and Standing Orders of the Metropolitan Council 19/11/1912.

21. White, Kate "Towards a Women's Movement: 1900 - 1908", typescript, 1976.

22. ibid.

23. Hyslop, Anthea, "Temperance, Christianity and Feminism" in *Historical Studies*, Vol 17, No 66, April 1976.

24. Rischbieth, Bessie *March of Australian Women* Paterson Brokensha Pty Ltd, 1964, pp 11-13.

25. In the early 1970s women met to discuss women's role and the formation of WEL. Irene Greenwood, whose mother Mary Driver had been closely associated with the WSG, was adamant that the organisation should be non-party - a continuation of the early 1900s determination to foster an organisation for all women.

26. NCW Minute Book 1911 - 1913, 1389A/1, 5/1/1911.

27. ibid.

28. Un-named newspaper clipping, 11/3/1913, Evelyn Wood Papers.

29. White, Kate op. cit.; Lady Edeline Strickland quoted ibid.; NCW Minute Book, op. cit.

30. Un-named newspaper clipping, Report on NCW activities 26/7/1912 in NCW Minute Book, op. cit.

31. Holman Papers, Battye Library 1744A.

32. Johnston, Isobel "Looking Backward Fifty Years in Relation to the Establishment of a Maternity Hospital for Women, 1909 to 1959", typescript, p1, Evelyn Wood Papers.

33. ibid. p6.

34. ibid. p1.

35. The *Western Australian*, 25/3/1915.

36. Report of the Annual Meeting of the WSG, 1912.

37. Beadle, "Women's Labor Movement", op. cit.

38. For example the *West Australian*, 4/10/1916 and the *Daily News* 4/10/1916.

39. The *West Australian*, June 10, 1932 recorded that she was rewarded with the OBE in 1920 for these services.

40. Shelley, Cecilia, Interview with Robin Joyce, June 1980; ALP State Executive Correspondence, 1688A/81, letters from Scadden, Carpenter, Ardagh, Hudson, Dodd, Mullaney, Keyser outlining their refusals to support endorsed labor candidates at the forthcoming elections; 19/4/1917 recommendation that Scadden, Dodd, Hudson, Mullaney, Thomas, Carpenter, Ardagh, Cornell and Taylor be considered outside the party; "Nationalist Labor" proposals to support the nationalist Government proposals to introduce legislation to prevent union funding of the ALP discussed in a letter 18/9/1918 from the general secretary to the Premier; and ALP State Executive 1688A/103 letters stressing the urgent need for action to unite the party after the conscription crisis. In addition, see Robertson, John R. "The Scadden Government and the Conscription Crisis 1911 - 1917: aspects of Western Australian political history", M.A. Thesis, Western Australia, 1958.

41. Metropolitan Council, Burswood - Belmont Branch ALP, 1319A/39 letters 20/11/1916, 18/4/1917, 16/5/1917 and 23/5/1917.

42. Beadle, "Grown Old in the Women's Movement", typescript, 1929, Evelyn Wood Papers.

43. White, Kate Conversation with Robin Joyce, December 1976.

44. NCW Minutes, 21/10/1916.

45. The *West Australian*, 20/11/1916.

46. NCW Minutes, 27/9/1918.

47. Un-named newspaper clipping, 1919, Evelyn Wood Papers.

48. NCW Minutes, 1389A/2, 28/3/1919 and 20/3/1921.

49. The *Daily News*, Friday, October 28, 1927.

50. The inclusion of the *West Australian* clipping from 1929 in Beadle's collection suggests this work could have included Labor women. At the least, the item suggests that Beadle remained interested in Cowan's activities.

51. The *West Australian*, 10/6/1932.

52. NCW Minutes, 1920.

53. Mrs Dodd, a Labor woman, supported Edith Cowan and remained in the organisation, possibly maintaining ties with other women in the ALP (see NCW Minutes, 21/10/1916).

54. ALP State Executive 1688A/118, letters 23/7/1917, 25/3/1918, 21/4/1918 and list of delegates to the ALP Conference 20/4/1918.

55. Premiers Department, 1496 227/21, NCW Papers.

56. Premiers Department, 1496 227/21, Labor Women's Organisation letter 7/8/35.

57. Un-named paper clipping, 10/12/1930, Evelyn Wood Papers.

58. Premiers Department, File 292/29, WSG, 21/2/1929.

59. In 1928 the SSTUWA moved 'That further action be taken to facilitate the interchange of teachers between states as this is profitable to both teachers and states', suggesting that, as with women's organisations in Western Australia, interstate links were an important aspect of workers' organisations.

60. NCW Minutes, 19/6/1917.

61. Education Department, Household Management File, 2842/26.

62. Minute Book 2446A/40 State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, Household Management Teachers' Association 1918 -1944.

63. Education Department, Strike of Teachers, July 1920, 147/20.

64. Threlfell, Dorothy Interview with Robin Joyce, 3 May 1979.

CHAPTER 4
A FIT PLACE FOR A WORKING WOMAN?

> A living wage was supposed to be a wage that would carry a measure of freedom, but 80/- weekly brought women down to the breadline. It was outrageous that a Judge should presume that girls living with their parents should get wages which would not allow for any profit for parents who mostly have struggled for years to prepare girls for use...these parents must keep on struggling and get no reward from their daughters at work other than the bare cost of board and lodging. The wage fixed by the Board allows the employer to get two women to work for the wages of one man. It was impossible for women workers to rest contented on 7 1/2 per hour.
>
> Kate Dwyer, 1919. [1]

In 1919 Mrs Francis Anderson suggested that women in Australia were prepared to forgo education, paid work and social improvements in favour of marriage and children. [2] Her story of a teacher who met 'the fate which awaited all highly respectable women in Australia... Someone married her' [3] reflected the reasoning underpinning the Arbitration Court devised family wage. However, the assumption was often wrong, women being responsible for families or, at least, for themselves.

Despite her belief that Australian women married, she also acknowledged that population increases and economic downturn had been forced many into domestic labour. She identified industrial problems in this sector, wrongly asserting that women employed in hotels, restaurants and laundries worked under ideal award conditions. [4]

Unrealistic attitudes towards women's situation affected their private lives also. Although a range of accommodation was advertised in the mid-1920s, demonstrating an expectation that women would need to fend for themselves, this was not cheap. Women whose wages did not include accommodation were dependent rooms in boarding houses or private homes.

A room in an inner suburb was available for eight shillings and sixpence plus one shilling for electricity. Full board in the same accommodation cost twenty seven shillings and sixpence. Another inner city room, described as nice with a separate entrance, suitable for two girls was twenty two shillings and sixpence. Sometimes restrictions applied - "the right type of woman" or "business girls" were required. [5]

Some advertisers did not mention the tariff; others included items such as a charging one penny for a slot gas heater. A flat, described as nicely furnished and comprising kitchenette, lounge, balcony, gas and all conveniences was one pound, seventeen shillings and sixpence a week. A bedroom plus sitting room was twenty five shillings a week for a temporary lodger or one pound a week for a permanent arrangement. A room and use of a kitchen could cost fifteen shillings; two rooms and a kitchenette with a gas stove, two pounds and five shillings. Sometimes a scale of costs were advertised so that a room shared between two was offered at eighteen shillings a week each or for one woman at eighteen and sixpence; another room at one pound a week each for two women and twenty two shillings a week for one female occupant. Most board and lodging cost between twenty two shillings and twenty seven and sixpence for each woman a week. [6]

Although a family could pay far more for accommodation this was not always the case. Houses in areas similar to those in which the above rooms were advertised could be relatively cheap, for instance a five bedroom house a short distance from the city was advertised at twenty five

shillings a week; a four roomed house from one pound to four pounds. On average houses were around nineteen shillings and seven pence a week. [7] A family man earning a family wage was advantaged over some single women and women with families who also had to pay the same rent on a percentage of the man's wages.

Travelling expenses were, on average, higher for women. Based on information from staff at a department store, women spent between one shilling and sixpence to three shillings and eight pence a week, with most spending three shillings a week on travel. At the same store, men's travel cost between one shilling and three shillings a week. [8]

A 1907 estimation of women's clothing costs was around eight pounds a year, one pound five shillings for hats and a portion of a family allocation of one pound and five shillings for coats, one pound and four shillings for hosiery, three pounds and twelve shillings and sixpence for underclothing, one pound for night wear and one pound for gloves, ribbons, cottons, needles, buttons and pins, per year. [9]

By 1925 clothing for a woman worker was estimated at the cost of around thirty five pounds a year, with underclothing estimated at five to seven pounds a year. [10] In the early 1930s a woman's frock of artificial silk sold for around two shillings and sixpence and children's garments, such as a boy's two piece romper suit, for two and sixpence and a girl's dress and bloomers for one shilling and sixpence. [11]

Living conditions for women with children were improved marginally by the introduction of Child Endowment which was paid to the children's mother. However, although the principle had been endorsed by numerous organisations, including the ACTU, the first families to benefit were those of Commonwealth Public Servants in 1920. Income related conditions applied and the payment of 5/- a week for each child under 14 years of age was made to only those officers whose salary was four hundred pounds or less, inclusive of

the payment of Child Endowment.

It was not until 1927 that all workers who qualified received the payment. Later, payments were made for children other than the first child in a family. Until 1934 employers were levied to provide funds for the payment; after this it was taken from consolidated revenue.

Child endowment payments were the only recognition that the family wage at times was not distributed within the family and that women had a special call on government services for their children. Wages for housewives were suggested as early as 1937, on the basis that although 'most husbands treat their wives with both fairness and generosity...in a small percentage of cases (which percentage added up makes a large number in the total population)...wives do not always get a fair deal. The fact that the wife was legally entitled to some money would make all the difference to herself and her family...' [12] However, this method of dealing with the inequities involved in the family wage was not implemented. In addition, the proposal did nothing to rectify the situation for women without husbands - they were forced to maintain families on a women's, rather than family, wage.

Women in paid work who had little family support, or had dependents, did not benefit from the family wage which the labour movement endeavoured to maintain. Their living conditions were often harsh, women's need for single housing borne out by the advertisements for such accommodation, as well as studies established by basic wage cases. Even where family support *was* forthcoming, and paid directly to the mother through child endowment, this was limited - a woman who may have had no support and one child, received nothing through the program. A woman's hearth was a poor thing. Recognising this, women in the labour movement worked to overcome similar inequalities in their working conditions.

Discrimination on the basis of task

Anderson's concerns about discrimination in 1919 were

reiterated in the 1930s by Muriel Heagney in relation to women's work. [13] Australian women may no longer have been as dependent on marriage as Anderson suggested but found only eighty seven occupations open to them. In comparison, America women had for several decades been recorded as working in all but around forty of the total trades referred to in American statistics. [14] Western Australian statistics bear out this observation.

In the census years 1911, 1921 and 1933, most women workers were classified as domestic, industrial or commercial, and a small percentage professional. Although mainly wage and salary earners, a small proportion were employers or worked for themselves. The number of women in domestic occupations in WA was a greater percentage than in each of the other states, although the number of female breadwinners in WA was smaller. [15]

By 1921 1,400 women were unemployed, giving scarcity of work as the main factor in their condition. Industrial disputes were blamed by four women for their lack of employment. However 317 women were not explicit, giving "other" as the cause; sixty nine gave no reason and 574 cited illness. [16]

As well as being visible members of the workforce (although in a limited range of occupations) women's employment was also legitimised by the establishment of the Women's Branch in the State Labour Bureau. [17] It held a multiplicity of information on occupations, wages, vacancies and registrations for work and engagements, providing a picture of women's attitudes to paid work, as well as the conditions under which they worked.

However, although the establishment of the Women's Branch acknowledged the reality: that women were employed and that there were jobs for them, there was plenty of opposition to women entering the workforce. Information was twisted to support this opposition. For instance, a newspaper article in 1913, critical of the falling birthrate from 27.16 in 1901 to 26.73 in 1910, suggested that women's

access to the workforce contributed to the problem. Further, their work in factories and workrooms was blamed for deaths of mothers in childbirth. Even more worrying for women who believed in equality was the claim that an increase in 'lunacy was due to the unnatural employment of women which had increased from 14, 349 in 1906 to 16,002 in 1910.' [18]

At times these arguments were undermined, Labor women being largely instrumental in fostering women's belief in their entitlement to paid work. One attempt to put into practice their beliefs was through supporting the provision of facilities to assist women workers. For instance, as early as 1907 the Labor women supported the establishment of a creche at Fremantle for the children of women workers. [19]

Despite opposition to their joining the workforce, women were keen to do so. Figures for July 1925 provide a picture of women's attitudes to work, as well as their conditions. In this year 1,493 women registered for work, an increase of ninety nine on the figures for 1924. Women were engaged in 1,863 positions through the Women's Branch, exceeding the registrations for employment. This figure supports anecdotal evidence given by women working at the time that they moved from job to job during the year. Rather than being required to register each time they left a position they merely had to approach the Branch about new vacancies. [20]

In this period vacancies were 1,025 in excess of the engagements arranged through the Branch and women were able to choose between a number of positions in the occupations open to them. They preferred daily work, but were often re-employed by the same employer, and a 'competent and trustworthy daily worker' [21] was able to build up a constant round of jobs. Women showed a marked disinclination to accept work in the country, except in those hotels which adhered to union wages and conditions. [22]

Wage differentials on the basis of gender

In 1935 Australia wide wage differences based on gender

had become a major issue. As a result, Heagney wrote *Are Women Taking Men's Jobs?*, [23] the outcome of a survey undertaken to investigate the position of women workers in Victoria. The report was based on information from trade unions, business people, statisticians from the Commonwealth and Victorian governments, state and commonwealth Public Service Commissioners, employers and organisations circularised by the Equal Status Committee as well as the Committee and its officers such as Alice Henry. [24]

Heagney's account provided the most comprehensive information about women workers in Australia in this period. Additional material from particular industries is also useful in developing an understanding of the conditions Labor women and their supporters sought to address.

The clothing industry is of particular significance as at the beginning of the 1900s very little [25] was made in factories. This increased the difficulties of organising workers, leaving large numbers of women under the control of women proprietors who did their own cutting and fitting in small workrooms. Fine hand work complemented treadle machine work. With the advent of improved mechanisation these small workrooms gave way to mass production, decreasing labour costs, concentrating the industry in fewer hands and gathering women workers together in larger numbers than before. This ideally would have increased the possibility of unionisation. However, at the same time sweating was maintained as employers continued to contract work outside the system. [26]

In 1919 the Commonwealth Court awarded a forty four hour week in the clothing industry, based on Mr Justice Higgins' belief that increased output from the introduction of machinery should reduce employees' hours. Women customarily worked eight and three quarter hours a day for five days a week but their wages remained below those of their male co-workers. [27]

The Federal Clothing Trades Award of 1928 illustrates the wage differential suffered by women despite their being

the majority of workers and active unionists. (See Appendix 1). Women were paid equal rates for machining heavy overcoats, however few were given this work. In addition, in the same award the piece work log maintained differentiation (on the basis of gender) for work of the same kind. Rates for sac coats show the discrepancies. (See Appendix 1).

Again, except in two cases wage differentials applied - throughout the log the female rates were two-thirds of the male rates for identical jobs. Western Australian workers were not covered by the constitution of the Federal Amalgamated Clothing and Allied Trades Union, and therefore omitted from the Federal Act covering the clothing industry. It is therefore not unreasonable to believe that even poorer conditions applied.

Women worked predominantly as machinists in the boot and shoe industry. In 1928 they were paid around two pounds twelve shillings and sixpence a week. Despite increased production this rate decreased to around two pounds and one shilling in the 1930s. This result validates workers' concern that lowered wages could result from linking them to economic conditions in a downturn but did not necessarily lead to increases where productivity gains took place in isolated industries. [28]

The union and employers agreed to use gender rather than ability or ambition to restrict work in the boot and shoe industry. Women were generally given what was referred to as women's work, and were paid only women's rates. Although girls were given jobs at "clicking" and other work which was usually allocated to men, this rarely happened. If women were employed in direct competition with men they were paid male rates. Because of special conditions, married women were employed at times during hours which allowed them to fulfil domestic responsibilities - 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. - and paid pro rata rates. [29]

As the conditions in the boot and shoe industry were set by the Commonwealth, workers in WA were treated similarly to their Victorian counterparts. They were paid

the fixed rate for the work, which was highly specialised. Although this favoured workers when trade was good they were disadvantaged when it declined. In the 1930s the fixed rate became the maximum paid, often falling below this when workers were forced to work shorter hours. Women received about 50% of the male rate, worked forty four hours a week, like them, and rarely received overtime during the 1930s.

In the rubber industry, conditions were similar. Increased mechanisation and changes such as rationalisation and new processes producing different types of rubber goods began a move toward the employment of more women. The forty four hour week also applied in this industry as did a basic wage, in this case thirty five shillings and sixpence. However, workers usually received a higher level of pay and the 95% of women on the "task and bonus" system averaged around three pounds a week. Whether this was partly the result of women's involvement in their union or as delegates on the Federal Council or the employment of the WO or a combination of these factors, is difficult to determine.

The manufacture of food and drink was diverse, with a number of unions covering employees, producing particular difficulties for unions members and their officers. [30] However, it is possible to look at the conditions for women in the industry in general through the Heagney findings. Of particular interest is the move of men into the traditionally female tasks of baking and brewing - and the corollary, taking home the highest factory wages available at the time. The table at Appendix 1, "Wage Differentials in Female Industries", although incomplete, [31] demonstrates that despite the femininity of the industry wage differences which discriminated against women remained.

A female worker on the minimum wage and over earned about 39/7 and pieceworkers averaged 45/2. However, where, for instance, women's tasks had not been taken over by men, the wages were uniformly low. This was particularly so in the sundries (grocery) area in which soap, candles, boot polish, cereals, and matches were manufactured. Juvenile

workers earned around 21/8 which also maintained low labour costs in particular industries. [32]

Unlimited juvenile labour flourished, in terms of numbers, in the confectionary trade and hours remained long despite mechanical improvements. Both women and men worked nine hours and thirty six minutes daily for a five-day week. Although a Commonwealth Award covered wages and conditions, the women and men were organised into separate unions. Like the involvement of women in women's unions in WA, women staffed their own union and Federal Council. Some large firms deducted union dues from wages, although in smaller shops these were collected by shop stewards. [33]

In the printing industry women and junior workers were excluded from skilled sections of the industry. As well restrictive clauses covering the work to which they were admitted were adopted. For instance, women were allowed to work after 6.00 p.m. only if another worked with her; and women, juniors and apprentices were restricted from working before 8.00 a.m. or later than 9.00 p.m. in any case. This maintained women and young workers in the lowest levels of the industry, such as envelopes and stationary (where there were 151 females per 100 males). This compares with the 35 women per 100 men in general printing and bookbinding. [34] Wage levels also illustrate the conditions which maintained women at the lowest levels of the industry, as evidenced by the table on male and female tasks by wage at Appendix 1.

Despite discrepancies which discriminated against women, printing had one of the highest levels of female participation. In addition, women were involved in the union - one of the most influential of the Australian trade unions. [35]

Western Australian salespeople's wages in 1923 demonstrate the rapid increase of inequality between workers on the basis of gender. Well before the time that each might have been expected to face the possibility of having adult responsibilities men's wages were significantly higher than women's. (See Appendix 1 for details). It was claimed that

if women were paid equally they would be used to displace male workers [36] - an argument which arose periodically. Work was highly structured between female and male tasks as shown in the table at Appendix 1.

The Commonwealth Basic Wage in 1934 included a 10% restoration case from the Commonwealth Court Judgement. Through this Perth male workers received a basic wage of three pounds and six shillings; women's wages were maintained as a proportion in each existing award, around 52% of the adult male wage. In the states basic weekly rates were fixed by Industrial Tribunals. However these maintained the differentials. In WA the basic wage for males was three pounds and eleven shillings and for females, one pound, eighteen shillings and fourpence, coming into operation in August 1934. [37]

Paid domestic work was undertaken in private service or boarding houses, hotels and restaurants. One cook-general explained the lack of interest in the work as a result of long working hours, little time free and additional tasks when her employers were sick or entertaining without compensation and the loss of "off-duty hours". [38]

Working in a private home, because of poor conditions and loneliness, was seen as the worst of domestic positions. In hotels, boarding house, cafes, restaurants and clubs conditions, although not universally desirable as some of the conditions described by one worker as, 'well organised, with expert supervision and training', [39] could be influenced by industrial action.

Women's work, hedged round as it was with discriminatory legislation and Arbitration Court decisions, affected in no small way their aspirations outside the workforce. Unless a woman was employed in a profession in which her salary, even though less than that of her male counterpart, allowed her a reasonable standard of living, [40] she was forced to support the ideology which promoted marriage and family as the most acceptable work for a woman. Her living conditions reflected the poor regard in which a

single woman or female breadwinner was held. The reality increased the appeal of the myth that the Australian woman was a helpmeet to an Australian independent male who needed additional income to support a wife and family.

Discriminatory safety legislation

The low level of mechanisation such as treadle machines or using a long knife or shears for pressing and cutting resulted in long hours of labour. By the 1920s power machines were fairly simple, with single or double needles and button and button-hole machinery of 'a primitive type'. [41] These were replaced in the 1930s with 'a great variety [of machinery] extending from high-speed plain sewers to most intricate automatic embroidery machines'. [42] At the same time as the machines increased factory speeds, they saved labour - an advantage to the employer, but resulting in a widening pool of unemployed. Workers already facing unemployment because of generally poor economic conditions were thus increasingly put under pressure as employers sought to rationalise the workplace and improve efficiency.

Overtime was also a problem, leading to, on the one hand the advantages of receiving a wage based on time and a half, on the other, impaired health and a greater likelihood of industrial accidents. Employers were opposed to the practice, but permission to retain staff for such hours, and the competition arising from this, led to all employers conducting their business this way. [43]

As a result of the Royal Commission on Sweating, held between 1882 and 1884, safety measures had been introduced. As with discriminatory wage determination, safety legislation which controlled women's access to particular jobs or tasks also fostered their unequal position in the work force. The arguments for and against safety legislation, ostensibly (and possibly sincerely) made on behalf of women demonstrate the difficulties in determining fairness if sex is seen as a major component of the equation. [44]

The Commission found that females and young people should be issued with a certificate before they could be employed. The basis on which the certificate was to be issued raises the question of whether the innovation was a method of maintaining work for men or whether it was sincerely aimed at caring for those whose health it was considered more vital to protect.

In fact, permits were granted to under age workers on the basis of their parents' ability to support the family without the additional income. Although a proviso that the employee's best interests should be served was included, no specific reference was made to the worker's health. Rather, the reality of working people's lives - that they often had to forgo concerns about their long term health to accommodate immediate economic demands - was tacitly acknowledged.

Health was an issue in particular types of jobs. People under 16 years of age were not to be employed, unless they were in possession of a medical certificate of fitness. This applied in a wide range of occupations, such as aerated water works; letter press printing and bookbinding; metal works, iron and copper mills, blast furnaces and foundries; manure works; bone mills; glue works; bleaching and dying works; cigars, cigarettes and tobacco works; die-sinking and engraving works; candle, soap and tallow works; earthenware works; felt hat works; glass and glass bottle works, glass bevelling and cutting and glass silvering and staining; paint works, varnish works and white lead works; plumbers and wire works; and any industry in which benzol or lead compound was used.

Under no circumstances were young women under sixteen to be employed in dry grinding in the metal trade, dipping matches or making or finishing bricks or tiles. If under eighteen they were prevented from working in silvering mirrors through the mecurical process, making white lead, melting or annealing glass or using any guillotine machine using mechanical power, cutting machines in bootmaking and

platen machines for carton cutting. Wet spinning was exempt from restrictive conditions only if women were protected fully from water and steam.

Women and young workers were subject to other legislation which prevented them offering services as men could to an employer. For instance, working hours were limited and women under eighteen were not to lift weights heavier than 25 pounds. [45]

Women were also expected to make their own safety provisions when they worked with dangerous machinery. Rather than provide machines with safety devices women were made to wear protective clothing and cut their hair short or use devices such as hairnets. The conditions applying to concealment of women's hair became a major industrial issue in Perth in 1924. [46]

Women's unequal access to paid work, to the profits made from their labour is in no doubt. The poor conditions under which they worked, as observed by activists such as Beadle and Shelley and the source of union rank and file dissension, were also easily documented. However, the arguments needed to give weight to women's need for equality, which in turn would improve working conditions in general, were less easily won.

NOTES

1. Un-named paper clipping, 2/7/1919, Evelyn Wood Papers.

2. Anderson, Francis "Women in Australia", photocopy, 1919.

3. ibid.

4. ibid.

5. Pencil notes on the back of a letter advertising accommodation, used for evidence in the Basic Wage Inquiry, 1925/1926, *Basic Wage Enquiry Exhibits* Numbers 1 -106, 45/26.

6. *Basic Wage Enquiry Exhibits, op. cit.*

7. *ibid.*

8. *ibid.*

9. Letter from C.J.R. Le Mesurier to the Editor, July 14 1907, newspaper clipping, Evelyn Wood Papers.

10. *Basic Wage Enquiry Evidence*, Volume 1, 45/1926.

11. Heagney, *Are Women Taking Men's Jobs*, Victorian Open Door Council, Melbourne, 1935.

12. Daniels, Kay and Murnane, Mary *Uphill all the way*, University of Queensland Press, Queensland, 1980.

13. Heagney, *op. cit.*, p44.

14. *ibid.*

15. *The Census of The Commonwealth of Australia*, 1911.

16. *The Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, 1921.

17. *27th Annual Report*, State Labour Bureau, 1925, Pp10 - 12.

18. Un-named newspaper clipping, 1913, Evelyn Wood Papers.

19. Notes, "The World of Women's Work", Jean Beadle's Scrapbook, Evelyn Wood Papers.

20. *27th Annual Report, op. cit.*

21. *ibid.*, p10.

22. *ibid.*

23. Heagney, *op.cit.*

24. Heagney, *ibid.*

25. *ibid.*

26. *ibid.* p44.

27. See Adey, Ryan op. cit. for a full discussion of this matter.

28. Heagney *op.cit.*

29. *ibid.*

30. See Chapter 8.

31. Heagney, *op. cit.* p57.

32. *ibid.*

33. *ibid.*

34. Heagney, *op. cit.* p59.

35. See Chapter 7 which describes the work of Western Australian women in the WAMFPU.

36. Un-named newspaper clipping, Evelyn Wood Papers.

37. *Commonwealth Basic Wage Case*, 1934.

38. *ibid.*

39. *ibid.* p65.

40. In the professions, however, women were subjected to additional pressure - perhaps because their wages allowed them some independence. The case of a typist wanting to marry in 1929, and postponing the wedding because of the economic strains imposed by the Depression (such as a reduction in her salary from which she contributed to the family income) illustrates the point. Eventually marrying in 1935, she was forced to hide the change in her status because of pressure on married women to leave the work force. When it became known, she was fortunate that her enlightened employer recognised her worth and that marriage had not undermined it. On the other hand, women were divided on the issue, some suggesting that married women had everything that they should want whereas unmarried women were at least entitled to paid work - at the expense of married women, rather than men, single or married. See references to this in Chapter 3, in relation to the teaching profession. In general, the Australian ethos decreed that marriage provided women with a satisfactory job, regardless of the economic deprivation

this might entail. Usually women left the workforce on marriage (Heagney, *op. cit.* p99).

41. *ibid.* p43.

42. *ibid.*

43. *ibid.*

44. The current move to raise the retirement age for women from sixty to sixty five is a case in point. To many women who desire to remain in the workforce and have suffered discrimination in terms of slurs on their ability and right to work after they turned sixty, the changes are positive. Those women who do not wish to remain in the paid work force find the proposed changes negative even though they eliminate the bias against women arising from the age differential.

45. Heagney, *op.cit.* pp24 - 25.

46. A more detailed account of this event is in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 5
THE LABOUR MOVEMENT: RESPONSIVE OR DESTRUCTIVE?

> Is it that trade unionists are more advanced than any other organisation, or why is it that they number so many women among the workers for the cause? In no other section of the community do the women take such a prominent part in affairs of moment... [Also] it has now become a recognised thing that an election amounts to nothing unless feminines occupy very considerable prominence.
>
> The *Evening Star*, November 1907.

Women's efforts to improve working conditions were usually made through the unions and the ALP - the labour movement. Participation on equal terms with men was essential if women were to achieve their aims. Although women's success was spasmodic there is no evidence that women were ever deliberately excluded from the decision making processes. However, the movement was not immune to the myth that women's requirements were different from, and their capacities were inferior to, those of men. In addition, class as a factor in decision-making often subsumed a concern with discrimination based on gender. Despite grounds for conflict, conference debates and committee discussion demonstrate that the environment was often conducive to women using the movement on behalf of their industrial interests.

Representative structures and processes were developed to enhance members' access to decision making. However, these were often consciously or unconsciously designed to advantage members well versed in their operation. In addition, the status of some members gave their arguments more effect. These conditions sometimes undermined women's ability to make their mark. Sometimes the limitations were innocent; at others, contrived. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that women were not always united. Gender was

not women's only concern, they committed to labour ideology on as wide a spectrum as did men.

In less formal circumstances, such as fundraising, social occasions and election periods, a high level of comradeship was demonstrated. This contributed to an environment which encouraged women to consider themselves equal partners in the labour movement.

Structures in the ALP

The WA Branch of the ALP was unique in that the industrial and political wings were linked effectively and securely through joint membership of important decision making bodies. These were political branches, unions, District Councils (to which branches and unions sent delegates of equal status) the State Executive and General Council (or Congress as it was also known). Women established themselves as effective decision makers from the early 1900s by forming branches and using the ALP structure in which all branches were entitled to formulate resolutions, and send delegates to District Councils, State Executive and Congress. As rank and file members they were also able to pre-select parliamentary candidates.

District Councils operated at a level above the branch overseeing the election of party office bearers, WA delegates to the Federal Executive and the State Congress and State Executive delegates. They controlled the organisation of election campaigns and forwarded successful branch or union resolutions to the State Executive. As the Councils collected affiliation fees and retained two thirds of the acquisition they were an important source of finance for implementation of internal decisions requiring expenditure. In addition, Councils were responsible for policy making and resolution committees.

Of particular importance was the Disputes Committee which handled any local industrial dispute where the possibility of strike action or negotiation in the Arbitration Court arose.

State Executive was the decision-making organ between State Congresses where delegates debated successful resolutions from District Councils. It implemented decisions between State Congresses and settled matters of urgency, or established committees to inquire into such matters. State Executive officers were often delegated to such committees and the State Executive had the power to elect other members.

The General Council (later State Congress or Conference) held triennial meetings to adopt policy to be binding on ALP members, including parliamentarians. As delegates to Congress women influenced the policies Labor members of parliament promoted. However, direct influence on parliamentary debate was able to be exerted by only one Labor woman in the period, May Holman, MLA.

Parliamentarians may have had some flexibility in dealing with State Congress decisions. However, it is likely that those most strongly supported by rank and file members were supported or, if abandoned, created dissension. Such occasions were rare.

Party officers enjoyed considerable status and power. Most influential was the General Secretary, one of the few full-time paid Party officials. Others were District Council officers, executive members of the State Executive, and officers of branches and unions and committees. Parliamentarians were also powerful, having some degree of independence from State Congress decisions by virtue of their personal electoral status and influence, as well as the process of decision-making in government.

Membership fees were based on women's lesser capacity to pay. However, this did not deprive them of full rights and opportunities, demonstrating Labor's commitment to women in the movement. This was not an isolated instance. For example, in 1915 Labor men supported women's industrial organisation. A meeting held to foster women's membership was organised by women and men working together. The TLC paid for advertising and printing, members helped distribute

advertising dodgers, the Trades Hall was provided free of charge for the meeting chaired by the Council President. [1]

Further, when Labor women organised in the goldfields Julian Stuart, editor of the *Westralian Worker*, provided free space for their reports and advertisements. In addition, three male ALP members assisted the women to draw up the rules, strongly encouraging them to organise. Unions such as the Federated Miners' Union and the Eastern Goldfields Shop Assistants' Union made significant donations. [2]

The tradition of charging women less than men to join Labor organisations was followed when the Eastern Goldfields Women's Political Labor League was established at a meeting at the Workers' Hall in Boulder. The yearly subscription for members was 1/- and associates (all of whom were men) paid 2/6: in the first year there were ninety one members and twenty nine associates. Donations between ten shillings and sixpence and two pounds and two shillings were also made to the organisation by a wide range of unions and one individual male donor. [3]

Women became delegates to State Labor Conferences through women's and general branches and their unions. Delegates at the 1925 Conference included Shelley, Mrs W.D. Johnson, Mrs Clarke, Mrs Green, Holman, Elizabeth Clapham, Annie Warren, Miss McEntyre and Miss Brain. They were clearly unfazed by the need to develop policy on a wide range of issues, speaking on topics such as unemployment, wage schedules, elections, the LWO, Congress schedule, milk distribution in schools, unionisation, voting rights, railway passes for pensioners, the 44 hour week, the basic wage, widows' pensions, equal pay, holidays, motherhood endowment, denominational schools, private registry offices, allowances for indigenous mothers and free medical treatment for children. Not only did they contribute to debate but presented and seconded motions. [4]

Labor women's conferences were supported by the general movement and seen as an integral part of ALP policy making.

For example, the 1912 First Labor Women's Conference enjoyed the support of the WA Branch though its leaders. The Trades Hall was made available to Labor Women's Conferences under the same conditions as State Conference. Labor Women's Conference material was typed at the head office and officers of the state executive attended with the express purpose of assisting. [5]

However, sometimes internal disputes between conservatives and radicals thwarted women's aims. Action taken through the ALP Disputes Committee demonstrates the difficulty of sifting out the causes of what could, on the surface, be considered discrimination against women's aspirations.

Industrial activity associated with the HCCTRIUW illustrates the complexities. The union was affiliated to the formal bodies of the labour movement and the secretary, Shelley, was a radical member of the ALP. The union's request for support in their 1924 strike was rejected by the Disputes Committee. While accusing the Committee of lack of solidarity with the women and their aims, Shelley acknowledged women's reluctance to join and remedied this by nominating and becoming the first woman member.

Later the Committee endorsed the union's attempts to win further concessions from the Licensed Victuallers' Association. Although some of these were accomplished, preference for unionists was not and the union proceeded alone on the issue. McCallum, the ALP General Secretary intervened, creating dissension between the union and the Committee as well escalating personal antagonism between Shelley and her former mentor. [6]

However, as subsequent HCCTRIUW action suggests, individual unions were not always dependent on formal bodies of the movement. A special meeting was called to debate the prospect of returning to work and unionists' emphatic dissent from the Disputes Committee decision managed to achieve what the Committee could not. Although members eventually agreed to return to work without preference to

unionists they won conditions which were a significant improvement on the earlier concessions. An agreement for three years was signed with wage increases to 15/- a week for cooks and protection of strikers against dismissal. Significantly, in the light of the reluctance demonstrated by the Disputes Committee it was agreed that unionists would receive preference if all other matters were equal.

Wage inequality between women and men remained, discrimination being based on hours worked rather than entirely on gender. That women were limited to forty four hours when men worked forty eight hours a week maintained economic inequality, preventing women from becoming breadwinners with equal take-home pay.

Part of the problem arose from the labour movement's partial acceptance of the mythology about women's role, demonstrated by the strong support for matters more specifically related to what could be seen as "women's issues". For instance, in their fight for a maternity ward at Boulder - a demand that met the traditional view of women - the Labor women were defended strongly by Phil Collier, ALP Parliamentary Leader. [7]

Equal pay, the implementation of which would acknowledge women's role in the workforce was not so clearly argued and supported. Further, concern expressed for women's equality can be questioned: often members thought that women on low wages would wrest jobs from those seen as their rightful owners - men. However, alternative arguments, that women had a right to equal pay, were also made strongly.

For example, there is evidence that the ALP supported equal pay from early in the 1900s, although no strategies to eliminate the causes of women's unequal status were formulated. Rather than being the subject of a sustained long term focus campaign, interest fluctuated depending upon individual attitudes. However, when equal pay became an issue, male members were amongst vocal supporters. The Metropolitan Women's Labor League was not alone in its protests about William Somerville's conduct of equal pay

cases [8] when they claimed that a qualified woman should directly represent women's interests. [9] Debate at the Metropolitan Council, in which men predominated, demonstrates that some male delegates strongly supported the women's complaints. [10]

The industrial wing

Women's position in the industrial wing was weaker than that in the ALP. Occupational segregation limited women's work opportunities, leaving the majority clustered in a small number of weaker unions. In turn this limited women's representation in decision-making bodies, comparing poorly with the entitlement from major union affiliates which covered male only trades.

However, as has been briefly described above an active union in which female membership predominated was the HCCTRIUW. Although this was not reflected in the executive until the 1920s, the women's militancy questions the traditional view of women unionists.

Another union with a long standing commitment to electing women to peak positions was the Eastern Goldfields Asylum Employees Union. Ivy Pirani was Secretary from its inception in 1922, eventually sharing the position with John Pirani. [11] However, the amalgamation of the union with its coastal counterpart and the establishment of the Hospital Employees Union was an important step in her losing this position. [12]

The Laundry Employees Union; the Bag, Sack and Textiles Union; Tobacco and Cigars Union; and the Food manufacturing Union were in a different category. Although membership was predominantly female, women had no tradition of becoming major officials. [13]

When the Cleaners and Caretakers Union was established in 1920, the first secretary was a woman - Pansy Hawkes. Women were also on the executive. The Clothing and Allied trades Union generally voted women onto the executive, from its inception in 1914 as the South-West District Clothing

Trades Union. [14]

WAMFPU operations between 1917 and 1920 illustrate men's direct influence on women's participation in industrial matters, for good or ill. [15] The Metropolitan Council of the ALP initiated a meeting to form the WAMFPU, with the assistance of Casson, the WO and McCallum. Within a few days officers were elected, rules drafted and a meeting held between the new union and the established Typographical Union. A donation from the union completed the men's assistance to the women's cause.

At the same time the founding of the women's union demonstrates the determination of women working in the printing industry to become an industrial force. The WAMFPU, registered in 1917, by 1920 boasted one hundred and four members. Three years later a new union based on the amalgamation of the WAMFPU and the Typographical union illustrates women's acceptance into the mainstream. [16]

Women retained some independence within the larger union, taking strike action in 1927 to improve their wages and conditions. However, attempts to improve their conditions unilaterally was shortlived; the Typographical Union's later sought wage justice based on the family wage, with the support of women members. Their high profile had diminished by this time, possibly as the result of a combination of domestic responsibilities and a willingness to rely on high profile men for their representation. [17]

The Woman Organiser

The demand for a Woman Organiser was established by the First Labor Women's Conference. [18] Debate emphasised the need for organisation in the country, possibly within the political structure rather than in the more general labour movement. However the position became predominantly industrial, Casson, and later Beadle, playing a significant part in unionising industries in Perth, Fremantle and Midland between 1915 and 1919. [19]

After its initial tardiness in creating the position,

top level Labor support was wholehearted. The position was administered through the powerful Metropolitan Council at first, giving it authority during its formative period. Once established, the Council sought financial and organisational assistance from the Fremantle and Midland Councils. An important factor in the reorganisation was the need to unionise nurses at Wooroloo Hospital, requiring changes in distribution of the Organiser's work. [20]

Funding was an ever present problem and contributions were sought privately, from unions and Labor women's organisations. In mid-1918 a special committee, comprising Hooten, Alice Hogarth, Messrs Clapham, Driver and Leighton, Beadle and the Assistant Secretary was appointed to advise on augmenting the fund.

The position was held in high regard as is evidenced by the variety of fundraising ideas implemented, including high profile deputations to five unions who had not contributed to the fund. Most unions were generous in their support, some making appointments to hear from speakers on behalf of the position within two days of being requested to do so. ALP branches also contributed. The Eight Hours Campaign donated one third of its profits, and an appeal was held by the Social Democratic League. [21]

Despite this support, funding remained a problem and the committee decided to confer with the Shop Assistants Union and the South West Clothing Union to request that at least half of the WO salary, or an equivalent amount of time, should be spent on the organisation of their workers. The appeal was unsuccessful, [22] the example set by unions with male membership having only short lived influence, and possibly, duration.

Before it was disbanded on the Woman Organiser's advice, the position improved the status and practical outcomes for women's industrial causes. One of the most significant successes, both in the rapidity with which it occurred and continuing support, was the unionisation of women working in food manufacturing in Fremantle.

Organisation of the rope and hemp industries also begun when a mass meeting was arranged at the Fremantle Trades Hall for this purpose.

Special causes, such as that of the white workers, were publicised through leaflets distributed through the auspices of the WO. Pamphlets included poems, such as "The Wail of the White Worker" and short articles such as "Suicide or Shame?" and "An Arbitration Court Evidence Appeal". Miss E. Hooten, a union identity, became Treasurer of the white workers' fund. [23]

One shortcoming was the failure to organise domestic workers privately employed. Little work in this sector had been undertaken when in August the WO position was reduced to part-time due to lack of funds. Despite this, a great deal of other work was undertaken, one WO Report covering meetings with laundry, food manufactures, jute and hemp workers, factory visits, preparation of Arbitration Court cases and enrolling workers in the organised unions. [24]

The position was disbanded temporarily after the Shop Assistants Union (SAU), Clothing Trades Union, HCCTRIUW, Barmen and Barmaids Union, WAMFPU, Laundry Workers, Factory Employees, Hospital and Kindred Institutions and Domestic Workers were organised, giving women a strong foundation for union activism. The women were not neglected as enrolment of new members was be conducted by the ALP Secretary or Collector of Union Stewards, building on the appointment of union representatives at large establishments. [25] However, women were not always amenable, the Hospital Employees Union offer of further assistance to nurses at the Claremont Mental Hospital being rejected. [26]

A number of reasons could be advanced to explain the Labor women's silence on the demise of the position. One of the most important and astute women in the movement, Jean Beadle, was instrumental in the decision. In addition, the labour movement's sincerity in establishing a position specifically to organise women's labour was established. Not only were they supported financially and administratively,

problems were addressed by many of the most highly ranked party officials and alternative arrangements had been developed to maintain women's organisation.

In 1928 the Labor Women's Central Executive attempted to reinstitute the position. The Conference of Unions with Female Members was held at Trades Hall in May 1928 with the express purpose of re-instating the position. However, it was agreed that a general position should be established with responsibility for all unionists and to be funded by all unions. [27]

This decision was not a fait accompli. It was proposed that the General Secretary prepare a scheme under which an organiser should be employed with the financial burden falling significantly upon the State Executive. This was overturned by a resolution seconded by Hooten. [28] She believed that a woman organiser would serve women workers more successfully and that unions' financial obligation would increase their commitment to the position. [29] She attempted to put the responsibility firmly into the hands of the unions rather than encouraging political branches, through the State Executive, to accept the burden of financial arrangements and responsibility for management of the position. She went on to underline the responsibility of male unionists in establishing women workers on the same footing as themselves. [30]

The chairman, Mr Mooney, agreed that women workers' organisation would be of practical advantage to all unions. [31] This statement suggests that at least some male Labor members saw industrial organisation in its broadest terms when dealing with the unionisation of women. Their actions supported the view that any weakness amongst workers as a whole, whatever their sex or occupation, was detrimental to workers' conditions in general. On this basis the need for specialist positions, such as that of the WO, was supported. Unfortunately this philosophy did not influence the outcome.

A subsequent plan to employ a full time ALP Organiser with responsibility for country areas took no cognisance of

women's special needs. Not only was a male employed, he received no special brief for women. The person so employed was Bert Hawke, later to become leader of the WA Branch of the Party and eventually Premier. [32]

On the perennial issue of concern - equal pay - women found union responses as complex as those in the political wing. With its direct responsibility for the pursuit of cases in the Arbitration Court, support for Somerville as a successful Advocate on the behalf of male breadwinners and the realities of fighting employers from a position of relative weakness the unions were unable win more than limited concessions.

Women as parliamentary candidates

Labor women and their supporters believed that women should be eligible to stand for State Parliament. Although already eligible to stand for Federal Parliament it is reasonable to believe that distance may have played a large part in women's reluctance to do so. This may have been part of the reason for Beadle's comment in 1907 that women did not want to become Members of Parliament, rather they were aiming to become Town Councillors. [33] On the other hand, it must be acknowledged that women did not often win strong support for their candidature, although Beadle was asked to stand in 1933, an offer she refused. [34]

Women instigated the action to achieve federal representation, a meeting of women held in 1918 congratulating the British Government on proposed legislation and agreeing to pressure the WA Government to do likewise. There was only one notable success in the period - May Holman. Beadle and Shelley stood unsuccessfully for pre-selection to Senate seats, Shelley in 1924 and Beadle in 1931. Ada Butler was an active Labor woman and became an endorsed Labor candidate along with Labor members Alma McCorry and Nell Dungey in the 1921 State election. [35]

Holman was fortunate that her background as an employee of the Timber Workers' Union and daughter of J.B. Holman

increased her acceptability as a candidate in a winnable seat. She won her father's former seat of Forrest by defeating eleven Labor men in the pre-selection ballot - a popular victory for a woman with experience and ability. [36]

It is possible that women at the time did not see the situation as hopeless as it appears in retrospect. Although Beadle and Shelley, well known in both wings of the labour movement, did not win pre-selection women did see standing for parliament as a possibility. Shelley lost her opportunity to stand for the ALP in circumstances when it was particularly difficult for her to win and in 1931 Beadle was over sixty years of age.

Optimism such as that expressed by Miss Maynar, a SAU delegate to the Labor Women's Conference, suggests that women saw a future in parliament as a possibility. [37] Also, in 1913 the WSG established the Women's Parliament where women trained for the possibility of entering parliament, taking their places as Speaker and Ministers, Usher and Members of the Opposition. [38]

Holman won each pre-selection ballot conducted after her initial success, demonstrating that although some men were prepared to stand against her, more were her supporters. The Nationalist Party candidate, Edith Cowan was not so fortunate, losing her seat in 1924. Although she again sought endorsement this was unsuccessful as was her attempt to run as women's candidate in the late 1920s.

In 1933 Holman became Secretary to the Parliamentary Labor Party with the support of the Caucus in which she was the only woman. She was a regular delegate to the State Conference and represented the WA Branch at the ALP Federal Conference, the only woman to do so. Internationally, she became the ALP endorsed alternate delegate to the League of Nations Assembly. [39]

Special meetings on women's industrial position

Labor men's attitudes toward women and work are demonstrated through inquiries such as the regular Conference of Unions with Female Membership and a Committee of the State Executive called in 1933 to deal with women's work during the Depression.

The Conference was one of a series of meetings between unions, including the Barmaids and Barmen, Cleaners and Caretakers, Clothing Trades, Blind Workers and Hospital Employees, and the LWO and Secretary of the Metropolitan Council. Although concerned with women's industrial situation, only five of the twelve delegates were women representing the Barmaids and Barmen, Cleaners and Caretakers and Clothing Trades. [40]

Women's employment during the Depression presented special difficulties for the State Executive because the male breadwinner myth assumed male rights to the few jobs available. Miss McEntyre (proxy for Holman) and Messrs Nash, Bourke and the ALP General Secretary entered into considerable discussion. A break down of women's and men's opinions is not available but a variety of views was expressed and a consensus developed around concern about women entering the workforce. However, the report supported women keeping their jobs as family loyalties and finances were also involved: many of the young women in the paid workforce were 'the daughters of many of the Labour Movement'. [41] Although a proviso that employment should not be in jobs where motherhood could be impaired was included, women were deemed entitled to work and equal pay, despite the Depression. [42]

Bonus Certificate Scheme

The Bonus Certificate Scheme proposed in 1924 by Albany Bell Pty Ltd attempted to divide workers through differentiating between them on their financial contribution to the company. The company's history of undermining unionism was at odds with the industrial successes won by

the HCCTRIUW and the Bonus Scheme sought to discourage unionism.

Albany Bell planned to form A.B.C. Ltd, using employees' purchase of bonus shares in the Albany Bell chain. Although promoted as an attractive option, in reality employees had to participate in the purchase or lose their job. Conditions ensured the company maximum profit and full employment powers over staffing. In addition Albany Bell's gained loans at 5% interest - a figure far below that of the current interest rates. Bonus Certificate Holders (the employees) had fewer rights than Shareholders: they had no vote in the selection of management and no right to attend general meetings. Bonus Certificate Holders had no entitlement to independent maintenance and audit of their accounts.

Bonus Certificates were between five to fifty pounds deposit on one hundred certificates (the balance to be paid by bonuses) to the upper limit of 200 pounds for two hundred fully paid up certificates. A further category for non-Bonus Holders was included. However the HCCTRIUW found that although preference was to be given to current employees the Management reserved the right of choice based on bonus certificate purchase. Those who purchased one hundred fully paid certificates were likely to be the first preference for employment, second were women who paid a deposit of twenty five pounds with the remainder to be paid from bonuses, last were present employees who did not purchase bonus certificates. [43]

The A.B.C. Ltd prospectus claimed that plan was to test the principle of profit sharing to '... demonstrate its feasibility and utility in giving satisfaction to the Workers in their employment and satisfactory service to the public'. [44] This service appears to have been largely at the expense of workers. Holders of bonus certificates had to undertake not to waste material, time, labour or money in the discharge of their duties and were to serve the company loyally and faithfully and to the best of their skill and

ability. The company claimed the power to withhold money due to workers, who in the management's opinion, had failed to honour the undertaking. Certificate holders could institute dismissal of a co-worker if such a worker was deemed to have done other than have worked in the best interests of the company. [45]

Workers were entitled to appoint a representative from amongst themselves to consult with management on matters affecting the interests of certificate holders and the general welfare of the business. However, not only was the general welfare of workers ignored, management was able to make the final decision on any matter. The only reference to Bonus Certificate Holders as employees was that the agreement was signed on the understanding that conditions of employment were as determined by the current arbitration award or agreement for the industry as a whole. [46]

Employees were guaranteed only a 50% division of the profits; shareholders were to receive the other 50%, although it was originally claimed that only persons actually working in the business should share in the profit. As well as having limited holdings, employees were not entitled to shares in the profit if they resigned during a distribution term and new workers were unable to make claims until they had worked for a full distribution period. Shares were distributed after business expenses such as allowances for depreciation, reserves, and director's fees of three pounds a week had been meet. [47]

In keeping with the emphasis on management power and employee neglect increasing economies were expected to increase the profits available for distribution. However, these economies were to come from savings made in materials and plant, completely sidestepping the possibility that industrial confrontation or wage rises could affect the profits. The most important thrust of the agreement was curtailment of the employees' right to claim improved working conditions and wages and their right to pursue these at the expense of profits. No woman employed by A.B.C.

Limited was permitted to organise her own or co-worker's conditions through union activity without the company's consent. [48]

The company misunderstood the industrial strength of individual workers, an assessment that neglected the essential factor in HCCTRIUW successes. Women covered by the union were not the unthinking tools of militant leadership. An inquiry into the scheme was made by the union on 17 May 1924 and a report produced overnight, proposing changes based on Industrial Award conditions. It was shown that Employee Bonus Holders were not protected against loss. On the other hand, their initiative could be used to benefit the establishment - without direct rewards. This neglected the reality of a tea room waitress earnings which did provide remuneration for supplying the initiative and organising ability to manage a business.

The report ended with a strong recommendation to prevent the scheme from proceeding and was forwarded to the Metropolitan Council for information and consideration. The Council accepted that workers could be involved in a small business enterprise which suggests a softening of the approach to management and workers' practice arising from inevitable class conflict reminiscent of the 1890s. [49] However, it strongly supported the union's concerns.

Ryce requested and received the report. However, Shelley's role was pivotal throughout the period, which suggests she also would have taken part. [50] Swift response to the Metropolitan Council demonstrates that whether male or female dominated, the ALP was committed to preserving unions' influence.

Media openings for women's causes

Women's issues were well publicised through the official Labor paper, the *Westralian Worker*. In 1907 a women's column by "Hypatia" was begun and another by "Beatrix" was introduced by October. [51] "Women's Sphere" and "Pearls of Wisdom" were also produced, giving several

pages over to women's issues. Women were chosen from the wide range of established Labor women's organisations to write articles or become editors. Changes in the columns suggest that individual editors' concerns set the tone rather than a general editorial policy. The remainder of the paper was also open to news about women's activities in their branches and unions. [52]

One of the first debates in the women's columns recommended that all children, whether their mothers were married or not were worthy of State financial assistance. This conflicted with current mores, and remained an issue for the Labor women well into the 1920s. [53]

Women used the opportunity to join the controversy over equal pay, the women's case being documented equally with that of the workers' advocate, Somerville.

Although generally supportive toward women as workers and ALP activists the lack of a feminist ideological framework was also apparent. Some of the attitudes toward women were patronising and generally unresponsive to the expanded role many in the Party were demanding; at the same time, other contributions from Labor members of both sexes were supportive, informed and feminist in content and intent. [54]

Advocates for setting aside a special page for women's contributions were questioned when in 1919 the article, "A Fundamental Matter. The Wages of Women", was printed. It was suggested that although a subject may refer exclusively to women it could also be significant for men and should be included in the general section of the paper. [55]

Despite the possibility that a women's page led to the omission of debate on women's concerns in the main part of the paper, there is evidence that this did not always happen. In 1919 women's difficulties in the workforce were compared with the relative ease experienced by returned service personnel. Two points were made: first, that women were forced to leave the workforce on behalf of returned soldiers; the second, that competition already existed

between women over available jobs. It was said that the female relatives of men killed during the war were given preference, whether they needed the work or not sometimes at a cost to women who were desperate. [56]

This article also pointed out other divisions between workers, such as those between junior and senior workers. In this case, the possibility that a woman may be a breadwinner was recognised. However, in specific instances such as the 1919 WA Education Department cleaners' case, awareness of the philosophical discussion did not strengthen their claims. [57]

A clue to the movement's inability to deal with the issue is in the juxtaposition of two articles in the *Worker* on 25 April 1919. "The question of law and custom" was highly critical of the subordinate role of women in the home and at school. [58] The writer commented that it was not surprising that men were, '...imbued with the deep seated conviction that the inferiority, disability and the degradation of women are simply necessary conditions of a divinely appointed system; the inevitable adjuncts of a social and political economy, which it would be unwise to subvert or even modify: more particularly as the almost universal acceptance of this belief on the part of men acts as a sedative to their conscience and a stimulant to their egoism'. [59]

The second article, "Pushing Australian Industry By Consuming Our Own products", advertised a cookery book. It was suggested that it '...will be heralded with much pleasure by the economical housewife' [60] and should be owned by every '...working man's wife'. [61] The assumptions in this article were those which maintained women on less than equal pay, in subordinate roles in the home, schools and workplace and which successfully undermined women's attempts to be seen as legitimate members of the workforce.

Such assumptions were re-enforced throughout the period: inclusion of a women's page, complete with feminist articles, supportive material in the remainder of the paper,

comments and behaviour of Labor men sympathetic to women's aims were of limited value in redefining the effect of material which so aptly fitted into the general range of societal thought and behaviour. As a result, attitudes expressed through the *Westralian Worker* suggest that the labour movement was torn - often women were supported in their aims, at other times reports and commentary showed a strong paternalistic streak. Opinion often crossed gender lines, women at times arguing that class warfare should outweigh concerns based on gender.

Women were not solely dependant on the official Labor paper. A specialist journal, the *Women's Co-operation*, also printed in Perth, supported women's right to work. The journal had a religious emphasis but at the same time there was an interest in electoral matters, in which women were acknowledged to have the right to work as canvassers and stand as candidates. In addition, it was suggested that industries hitherto open only to male workers should be run by women as well as '...capable women [must] do the work that suits them best'. [62] The journal also supported feminist material and accepted assistance from union women, whom they saw as 'helpful and as powerless as the Labour women'. [63]

Women's organisations such as the WSG also established a publicity arm through papers such as the *Dawn*, begun in 1911. Its strongly feminist tone is evident in an article, "Our Social Purpose, 1934: A Word with Social Workers", in which the possibility of the disintegration of the women's movement as it had been known was reported. The writer, however, suggested that "the second woman movement" was already being established. [64]

Commercial media outlets were also used effectively by women associated with the labour movement and women's organisations. In particular, they used the Letter to the Editor columns as a useful, free source of publicity for their cause and a means through which their aims could be explained. Sometimes their causes were endorsed, the media

often developing emotional arguments on the women's behalf and publishing articles admiring particular women. At other times the women, and their cause, were vilified.

The *Truth* also offered women an opportunity to discuss issues through its column, "Dame Marjorie" and correspondence was invited from 'Women, Humanitarians, Reformers, Workers and Thinkers.' [65] Issues raised by the labour movement, such as concern for deserted woman and children, were also approved. [66]

The newspapers with the widest circulation were the *West Australian* and the *Daily News*. They often ran stories on the Labor women's activities and, although patronising and negative at times, brought women's activities to a wider public. Arbitration Court decisions were reported in neutral terms, although a more dramatic approach was taken with stories covering industrial disputation.

Recognising the complexity is the key to assessing the level of assistance Labor women won through the organisational bodies of the labour movement and the labour media. At times it was extremely supportive, both in terms of financial commitment and assistance from Labor men with status and power. However, Labor women were also justified in their belief that sometimes their aims were subverted because the impact of policies on male breadwinners was a major consideration.

NOTES

1. Beadle, "Women's Labor Movement. Life and Work in Western Australia", op. cit.

2. Un-dated paper clipping, *Westralian Worker*, Evelyn Wood Papers.

3. Report of the Goldfields' Women's Political Labor League, 11 December 1907, Evelyn Wood Papers.

4. *WA Branch ALP Labor Conference Report*, Westralian Worker Press, Perth, 1925.

5. Joyce, op. cit. 1979.

6. See Chapter 9 on Cecilia Shelley and Alex McCallum's relationship.

7. The *Westralian Worker*, 17 July 1908.

8. See Chapter 6.

9. Metropolitan Women's Labor League, Minutes, 17 October 1913, Evelyn Wood Papers.

10. Undated newspaper clipping, Evelyn Wood Papers.

11. It is not clear whether John Pirani was Ivy Pirani's husband or son.

12. Joyce, op. cit. 1979

13. *ibid.*

14. Joyce, ibid.

15. See Chapter 7 for an account of rank and file activism in this union.

16. WAMFPU Minutes 1917 - 1920, ALP Metropolitan Council File No. 145, Printing Trades - Females, Battye Library, Perth.

17. ibid.

18. Joyce, *op. cit.* 1984 (a)

19. *ibid.*

20. Joyce, op. cit. 1979.

21. Joyce, ibid.

22. Metropolitan Council, letter dated 22/8/18, ALP Papers 1918, op. cit.

23. Joyce, *op. cit.* 1984 (b)

24. Joyce, op. cit. 1979.

25. This claim sits oddly with Beadle's earlier discussion of the difficulties in organising these workers. It is possible that, although some successes had been achieved in individual cases, no union in the sense of the organisation of a large number of workers was established.

26. Woman Organiser Report, Metropolitan Council Papers, ALP Papers, op. cit.

27. Report of a meeting of unions with female members, held in Trades Hall, Wednesday May 23rd 1928, typescript, Evelyn Wood Papers.

28. ibid.

29. ibid.

30. ibid.

31. ibid.

32. In the early 1980s the suggestion that a WO be employed in the National Office of the ALP was again considered. Kate Moore, formerly Executive Assistant to the National Secretary, became an Organiser, with special responsibility for women in the Party. This mainstreaming of the position was endorsed by ALP women and the position has remained in place, giving women in the Party a particular focus in the National Office without depriving the holder of the position of the opportunity to work on a broad range of issues.

33. The *Sun*, 1907, Evelyn Wood Papers.

34. Joyce, op. cit. 1979

35. ibid.

36. Emswin, "Australia's Premier Woman Legislator", The *Australian Woman's Mirror*, March 3 1936.

37. Un-named newspaper clipping, 1928, Evelyn Wood Papers.

38. Beadle (writing as Jeanette), "Women's Parliament", un-named newspaper clipping, Evelyn Wood Papers.

39. Holman Papers 1744A, Battye Library, Perth.

40. Report of a meeting of unions with female members, op. cit.

41. ibid.

42. ibid.

43. Conditions of Employment in the A.B.C. Ltd, typescript, Cecilia Shelley Papers.

44. ibid.

45. ibid.

46. ibid.

47. ibid.

48. ibid.

49. Material for the preceding paragraphs is from transcripts 'Conditions of Employment in A.B.C. Ltd'; 'The A.B.C. Ltd, Form of Application for Employment and for Bonus Certificates'; and 'Report on Albany Bell's alleged Profit Sharing Scheme', Cecilia Shelley Papers.

50. Discrepancies in the records held by the union and those in the *Western Australia Industrial Gazette* make it unclear who was designated Secretary at this time. Both Cecilia Shelley and George Ryce are recorded as holding the position.

51. Un-named newspaper clipping, 1907, Evelyn Wood Papers.

52. The *Westralian Worker*, clippings, Evelyn Wood Papers.

53. The *Westralian Worker*, 18 October 1907.

54. ibid.

55. The *Westralian Worker*, 1919.

56. The *Westralian Worker*, 21/2/1919.

57. The *Westralian Worker*, March 1919.

58. The *Westralian Worker*, 25/4/1919.

59. *ibid.*

60. *ibid.*

61. *ibid.*

62. The *Women's Co-operation*, Premiers Department Papers, 607/24.

63. ibid.

64. The *Dawn*, Wednesday, January 17, 1934.

65. The *Truth*, undated but probably c1907, Evelyn Wood papers.

66. *ibid.*

CHAPTER 6

FEMALE BREADWINNERS AND THE ARBITRATION COURT

> Women thought that they had as much right to direct representation on the Arbitration Court as the men had...with the Arbitration Court constituted as at present it would be hopeless to expect the principle of equal pay to be accepted.
>
> A.H. Panton, 1925 [1]

Early days - early bias

WA Arbitration Court decisions and consultations had an important influence on perceptions of women's entitlement to work. The most significant decision was development of the family wage concept which mitigated against women's legitimacy as paid workers. However, attitudes to female witnesses and their evidence, the use of such evidence and judgements established women as useful, although not necessarily legitimate, workers outside the home - preferably in women's traditional spheres of work.

The provisions of the 1900 Arbitration Act were never used and the Act was repealed within a year. It was re-enacted with amendments but under its limited operation workers remained unprotected: no award could be reviewed until expiry or withdrawal of the award. Until an industrial dispute arose, and could be proven, workers had to abide by the conditions imposed by employers. [2]

As early as 1907 Labor women carried a resolution criticising Government amendments to the Act. [3] However, in objecting to unfairness to "workmen" Labor women demonstrate that they, like male members of the movement, were at times conveyors of the myth that workers were men,

and dependents women and children.

In 1912 requirements such as registration of all workers, regulation of industries, compulsory conferences and payment of a minimum wage (including contract and piece workers) were incorporated. The Court's jurisdiction was restricted: disputes could be referred only by a party to the dispute and deal only with matters on which the President had held an unsuccessful compulsory conference. Unions were effectively excluded from acting on behalf of workers in non-unionised industries or workplaces. Also, the consent of all parties was required for a legal practitioner to appear before the Court. [4]

Women workers, traditionally difficult to unionise and less likely to take industrial action than men, were seriously disadvantaged in this period. A clause giving employers of fifty and under employees the option of registering deprived such workers of protection under the arbitration system. [5] As with domestic workers who were not covered by the system, many would have been women.

Support from vocal women's organisations was emotional rather than practical. Although women's organisations could approach the government on matters of principle relating to women's working conditions women had to be unionised to seek a hearing under the Act.

By 1917 the system of arbitration was firmly established. Industrial issues which extended beyond the boundaries of WA came under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth Court which had come into operation in 1904. The *Workers Compensation Act* was amended in 1924, improving state government employees' conditions and reinstating the forty four hour week for workers who had been deprived of it.

A system of industrial legal principles gave fledgling support to the doctrines of the living wage. [6] The principles were confirmed through the work of Mr Justice Higgins as President of the Federal Arbitration Court. However, he also established discriminatory wage

determination on the basis of gender and occupation (which directly or indirectly included gender) as is made clear in his *A New Province for Law and Order* published in 1922. [7]

He contended that, although the living wage should apply to women it should apply 'with a difference, as women are not usually legally responsible for the maintenance of a family'. [8] In "male" occupations, such as blacksmith, a man's cost of living was to apply; in jobs such as milliner a woman's living wage was set; and where men and women worked, as in fruitpicking, the male wage applied. [9] The 1907 Higgins' Harvester Judgement was maintained into the 1930s underpinning the concept that a fair basic wage should relate to similar trades or levels of 'difficulty or disagreeableness'. [10]

Later Higgins demonstrated his commitment to precedent rather than current living standards when he used the Rowntree estimation of the basic wage in England as a basis for his judgements on differentiating between women's and men's wages. He determined that women's wages should be 35/- a week despite having acknowledged that board and clothing cost 32/6 a week. [11] Women's wages were later raised to 37/- as an employers' concession during a conference with the union. [14] This judgement then served as a precedent - establishing women's basic wage at a proportion of the male basic wage, and seemingly based on cost of living.

Turning to the specific Western Australian situation, a *Westralian Worker* report on a 1919 Arbitration Court case in Perth clothing factories illustrates some of the arguments made on women's behalf. William Barker, the workers' advocate, claimed that if the system continued it would '...develop into slavery that will bear comparison with the worst of the old world conditions...women [were] working forty eight hours a week, some standing all day, others sitting at rattling, roaring machines which make the whole room tremble with their vibrations'. [15]

Barker's arguments were aimed at immediate resolution of poor conditions, but were made in terms which undermined

women's long term legitimacy in the workforce. He suggested that their rights, 'As the future mothers of the race,' should be protected. [16]

An explanation for the unions' emphasis on the family wage principle lies in some of the Court's reasoning. In 1922 the Deputy President, Mr Justice Northmore, argued against the ordinary expenditure in the household of a man with a wife and three children under fourteen years of age providing the basis for the minimum wage. Rather, he supported the concept of ability of the community to pay, thus deftly sidestepping the important issue of a person's ability to subsist. Unionists retaliated by basing their counterarguments on the necessity to provide male workers and their dependants with a basic living standard.

As a result, union advocates were forced into arguing for the family wage so as to maintain the standard of living for at least the majority of breadwinners. The second argument advanced by Northmore was that an increased basic wage based on the family ignored 450,000 unmarried male workers for whom claims were made on behalf of 2,100,000 non-existent children. Union attitudes towards the family wage hardened and women's claim to a family wage was undermined in a context where, to maintain some semblance of fairness in wage determination unionists maintained women's inequality.

Federal Court decisions lent weight to Northmore's case, Higgins contributing to the prevailing view that the family wage was a radical concept, rather than a limited approach to wage fixing which discriminated against women.

1925 changes - hope for women?

Although subsequent Acts did not change the unsatisfactory principles already established, some improvements were accomplished. In 1925 a new *Commonwealth Arbitration Act* was passed, providing a stronger federal framework for arbitration through closer industrial links between the states.

The *Western Australian Arbitration Act 1925* was a vast improvement on the 1912 Act. A full time President, William Dwyer, was appointed and the Court's jurisdiction enlarged. It now had the power to proceed independently with industrial matters irrespective of whether the parties were registered unions or if work had stopped.

One provision of the Act laid down that public interest should be integral to determinations on wages and conditions and resolution of industrial confrontation. [17] This covered the Court and also gave the Minister of a state industry the power to intervene if the public interest was, or was likely, to be affected by any determination. [18] Demarcation disputes were given special consideration through the establishment of special boards. [19]

The adult male basic wage was set at four pounds and five shillings. Even with an increase of six shillings and six pence to some women workers, the adult female rate of two pounds, five shillings and eleven pence maintained female inequality. [20] This was only partially mitigated by the provision that industrial disputes could be determined by the Court if former agreements were inconsistent with an Award or Agreement in operation as a Common Rule; that, where a breech had occurred, action could be taken any time up to twelve months after to remedy it (replacing the requirement that action be taken within three months) and that an Award would remain in force until a new one had been determined.

Discriminatory wage determinations remained a cause of industrial action. For example, in 1926 the Clothing Trades Union made a new claim for women at the federal level. At 21 years of age they were to be paid an equal male minimum or a basic wage. [21] The difficulty of enforcing the award was recognised by Judge Drake-Brockman when in 1931 he ordered the unionisation of female employees in clothing factories where fewer than fifty were employed. However, he was unsuccessful in bringing this to fruition as the employers' appeal to the High Court was successful - by one vote. [22]

Drake-Brockman retaliated by ordering that union members, all other things being equal, were to be given preference. Although this was not his (or the union's) preferred position an instrument of industrial strength which other unions had difficulty in achieving was won.

The arbitration framework in which women sought industrial equality could be attributed to individual members of the State and Federal Courts. One of the most significant was Somerville, appointed to the WA Bench in 1905, and the first to raise the family wage doctrine from the Bench. [23] A commitment to the concept was clear from his first case in which he asserted the need for family responsibilities to be recognised in wages. This effectively raised the issue, but the 1902 decision which rested on a single man's wage, disregarding the family responsibilities of many workers, was to remain intact for some time.

Somerville received little local support so although his doctrine was followed up by Justice Higgins in the Commonwealth sphere in 1907 the struggle continued. Worthy as was the fight to improve working conditions it also effectively, if innocently, undermined the tenuous legitimacy women had won in the workforce because the term "breadwinner" became synonymous with male workers. Antagonism to equal pay may have reinforced the refusal to acknowledge that large numbers of women were also breadwinners. At the same time, the differentiation in wages in the 1920s carried through to the thirties - when women in even greater numbers were left to support their families as increasingly men lost their jobs and joined the 30% unemployed trying to find work.

An understanding of Somerville's role in the equal pay debate can be gleaned from his advocacy for workers early in his career. In 1913 the Metropolitan Women's Labor League protested when Somerville failed to pursue equal pay, claiming that a qualified woman should directly represent women. [24] Somerville again failed to support equal pay in the 1917 Basic Wage hearings. More dissension over his

advocacy broke out in the District Councils and Labor branches, leading to a State Executive debate after the issue was added to the agenda by the Midland District Council.

Somerville defended himself, apparently sincerely believing that his work had benefited women. In 1926 he wrote claimed that although dissatisfied with workers' conditions, they had been protected by the Court from fluctuations in working conditions and wages caused by World War 1. He cited women as particular beneficiaries of compulsory arbitration on the basis that previously only a minority of the most skilled could live on their wages without additional support. However, he admitted continuing dissatisfaction with women's wages. [25]

The arguments used to defend Somerville's position are important in that they highlight the role of the arbitration system and the workers' representative within that system. A white middle class male influence on WA society was reflected in the limited inroads even a most sympathetic representative could make. The Arbitration Court and the system over which it presided served to entrench a masculine view of wage determination.

Somerville's critics were therefore largely unsuccessful and he retained his position as the Workers' Representative. In 1928 he attended the Labor Women's Conference to discuss Arbitration Court requirements in assessing the basic wage. He was keen to involve Labor women in research, suggesting that records of their living and working expenses should be maintained to assist him and their unions to argue for better awards. [26]

Somerville was not alone in accepting that, although the changes made to women's employment conditions were unlikely to meet their demands for equality, they were realistic. The Equal Status Committee of Victoria suggested that the clothing award was the utmost that women could expect from the Commonwealth Arbitration Court. Committee members considered the clothing industry significant in

ensuring that women would maintain their jobs under a comprehensive award, despite its shortcomings in terms of equal pay based on the declaration that basic wage for men was the true Harvester equivalent. [27]

The Basic Wage Inquiry held in 1925 brings out many of the arguments which, while supporting an increase for workers, further undermined the concept of equal pay for women.

Mr E.H. Barker, appearing for a number of unions, contended that a female worker should receive 66% of the male basic wage thus establishing that even the union representative was prepared to accept the principle that women were not entitled to a breadwinner's wage. He claimed that some women (such as shop assistants) were already paid on that basis and, although some unions with women members believed that they should be paid a larger percentage of the male wage, the majority of unions supported the view that women should be paid 66% of the male wage. Although Barker said that he was not resiling from the 'attitude that [had] been taken up for equal pay for equal work in some callings which are now paid equally for both sexes'. [28] In this context this was small defence of women's equality. On the other hand, he did persist in the argument that women should receive an equal margin to that paid male workers, even if their basic wage was lower.

The Court's reasons for the decisions in the Basic Wage Declaration that year also demonstrate the thinking which supported the myth that all breadwinners were male and the outcome, that wages should be unequal based on gender. The Court decided on an adult male rate of four pounds and five shillings, comprising one pound and sixteen shillings for food, one pound for rent, thirteen shillings and sixpence for clothing and fifteen shillings for miscellaneous expenditure. Adult females' wages were to be two pounds five shillings and eleven pence - none of which was allocated to specific items.

Barker submitted that the number of children the Court

assumed as making up a family was too low. Under the sub-heading, "measure of dependency" the President, Mr Justice Dwyer, argued that the Court was correct in assuming two, rather than three, children should comprise the basis for the family, together with a dependent wife. The Court had established during the previous hearing that two children were the "domestic obligation" and Barker's case was based on this contention. [29]

Barker defended the policy with the argument that industry was called upon to provide for more than the requisite number of children during some part of a married workers' working life, and all the time for those without dependents. At the same time he acknowledged that this neglected some children, including those excluded by his preferred three child policy. He recognised the necessity for making further provision for children but did not agree that the basic wage was the way to accomplish this. Rather, he proposed that a system of child endowment be introduced for the purpose.

The Commonwealth Statistical Office also came to this conclusion, publishing its argument *The National Dividend*. However, its omission of female breadwinners in calculations reinforced the myth that the breadwinner was male.

Further, the term "breadwinner", now clearly referring to the male worker, single or married, and ignoring the female worker, breadwinner or not, was the term used in Mr Justice Dwyer's discussions on productivity. This debate raised the possibility that workers should be paid an additional amount in exchange for greater productivity - a debate which has gained credibility during the 1990s. Barker, using the term "worker" in to refer to the group which he believed should be rewarded in this way, implied that women would gain as much as men from this demand. However, this claim was unsuccessful. [30]

At no time was there any discussion of the criteria which might logically apply to unmarried women who had children to support, although when defending the two child

policy it was acknowledged that single men would have fewer responsibilities. Despite their inequality, women were seen to be advantaged under the WA system. Justice Dwyer LLB, the first permanent president of the WA Arbitration Court, claimed that Western Australian female workers were the highest paid in Australia. [31]

The President based his argument on the Act of Parliament under which the Court was created which stated that the basic wage should be an amount 'sufficient to enable the average worker...to live in reasonable comfort, having regard to any domestic obligations to which such average worker would be ordinarily subject. [32] Barker had suggested that the use of the word "any" before "domestic obligations" implied that provision should be made for three dependent children and that "ordinarily" meant those obligations which may apply "at any time". This widened the meaning of the Act to apply to a range of conditions rather than average conditions - the argument forming the basis of the President's case. Neither claimed that Barker's suggestions could equally apply to women's domestic obligations, who although not equal in numbers to men with dependants, at times had such obligations.

The Arbitration Court was predominantly male: the Judge, court officials and employers' representatives. It had been established by men and influenced by their perception of industrial relations. The Court was therefore unlikely to respond to attempts to radicalise its methods or judgements.

Women's role in the Arbitration Court

Women were not alone in their sensitivity to the preponderance of male court personnel in the Arbitration Court. An account in the *Westralian Worker*, describing the ability of women witnesses to deal with the Court, was full of admiration for them in what was acknowledged as a difficult environment. [33]

Workers' Advocates were particularly important as they

provided a permanent link between unions and the decision making body which effected their aims. Between 1917 and the Depression the formal position was filled by men, women's advocacy role being limited to cases specific to their union. As demonstrated by Somerville's behaviour, this gave men chosen by the labour movement an important influence on women's success or failure in establishing themselves as legitimate workers, entitled to employment, fair wages and conditions and part of the established process of industrial activity.

Although unions sometimes chose women as Advocates this was rare. Shelley, one of the few women so chosen, was the most prominent as a vigorous Advocate over a long period of time. Shelley's frankness was not limited to her fellow members in the labour movement and was as ill received by her opponents in the Arbitration Court. At the same time, her strong defence of her members increased her status in the union. [34]

Women's advocacy in the labour movement did not necessarily enhance their status in the Arbitration Court. For example, Beadle's lengthy public experience did not influence a Judge who treated her arguments on behalf of the South-West district Clothing Trades as a topic of humour rather than a serious matter. Only a *Daily News* report on her perseverance gave her the respect she deserved. [35]

Holman, although taking a secondary position, played a pivotal role in assisting her father in preparing cases when he became an Advocate. In 1923 she went with him to Melbourne and gave "yeoman service" while supporting him argue the timber workers' case in the Federal Arbitration Court. [36]

Women's most usual responsibility in the Arbitration Court was to appear as a witness, a subordinate rather than decision making or adversarial role. Lucy Smith, a dressmaker appearing in the same case as Beadle referred to above, was also dealt with in a summary fashion. She complained that her working conditions undermined her health

as she had to wait until 3.45 for her lunch. Adding to the unfriendly environment of the Court, the Judge derided the serious nature of her claim by stating that, he too, often had to wait for his lunch. Another witness in the case, Jemima Futcher, drew attention to the gender based limits imposed on her ability to earn an income: she stated that because she could make only skirts, at times she earned nothing. [37]

Health seems to have been a continuing issue, one witness complaining that machinery affected her nerves, giving her headaches which were severe enough to require medical attention. Another claimed that such conditions should be endured for only two years as in her fourth year of service she, '...was fast approaching a state of nervous breakdown'. [38] An earlier case raised similar issues, a witness telling the Court that she had to buy tonics every week to counteract the ill effects of her working conditions. [39]

In addition to the difficulties they experienced when cases came to court, unions and employees often had problems in actually having their cases heard. For instance, Judge Burnside was moved to complain in 1924 that 150 cases had been waiting three years for determination. [40]

By the 1930s the standard hours set by the Commonwealth Court remained at forty eight a week, although various unions had established an award of forty four hours as week. Women workers were to be entitled to work fewer hours a week than the standard rate and the forty four hour week granted to women's unions which had applied for a reduction in hours. [41]

Unions were an essential component of the collective bargaining system. However, as preference to unionists was rarely achieved, all workers were advantaged under improved awards and determinations. Ironically, preference did apply to the clothing industry. [42]

The myth maintained

When the Court set a basic wage for men as 'the true Harvester equivalent' [43] and established a lesser one for 'a single woman without dependants' [44] it confirmed the view that women were not breadwinners. Although the union defended its claim for of equal pay the Judge rejected the need for the Court to vary the Harvester Judgement principles. [45]

Heagney's arguments based on Aristotle's principles [46] and the spirited defence of women workers by some advocates did not solve the issue of equal pay. Rather, it became an article of faith that there was a male breadwinner for every family and that he should be supported with all the fervour an advocate could muster against the exploitative employer. In this environment women were unlikely to achieve their aims of equality, even in the matter of wages. By the 1930s they were forced to protect themselves against unemployment, leaving the arguments for equal pay until a later period of activity.

As early as April 1945 the *Labor Digest* published an article suggesting that women should not be forced to return to the kitchen after having successfully filled places in the workforce while men were overseas fighting the war - again women were fighting for jobs, rather than against the inequalities they faced in those jobs. [47] Returning women to "their kitchens" was further advanced in the 1950s. The concept and ideology was denounced to little avail and has been pursued ever since - a long term battle based on sustaining a myth.

NOTES

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4. *ibid.*

5. *The Western Australia Industrial Gazette*, March 8 1926, p279.

6. Heagney, *op. cit.* p31.

7. Higgins, Justice *A New Province for Law and Order* W.E.A. Melbourne, 1922.

8. Heagney, *op. cit.* p54.

9. Heagney, *ibid.*

10. Heagney, *op. cit.* p31.

11. Heagney, *op. cit.* Pp32 - 33.

14. *ibid.*

15. The *Westralian Worker*, undated clipping, Evelyn Wood Papers.

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23. Hicks, Margaret (daughter of William Somerville), Interview with Robin Joyce, November 1981.

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25. "Twenty one Years of Arbitration Court Work. William Somerville, Workers' Representative on the W.A. Arbitration Court", Westralian Worker Print, Perth, 1926.

26. Un-named newspaper clipping, 1928, Evelyn Wood Papers.

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28. *Basic Wage Inquiry Evidence*, Volume 1, 45/1926.

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30. *ibid.* p64.

31. *ibid.* p65.

32. *The Western Australian Industrial Gazette*, August 25 1927, p62.

33. The *Westralian Worker*, undated, Evelyn Wood Papers.

34. See Chapter 9 for details on Shelley's work in the Court.

35. The *Daily News* 24 June, 1918.

36. Emswin, *op. cit.*

37. *ibid.*

38. The *Westralian Worker*, undated paper clipping, Evelyn Wood Papers, op. cit.

39. *ibid.*

40. *ibid.*

41. Heagney, *op. cit.* p36.

42. Heagney, *ibid.*

43. Heagney, *ibid.* p38.

44. *ibid.*

45. *ibid.*

46. Heagney, *op. cit.* p3.

47. McNamara, Clarice "Must Woman Return to the Kitchen?", *Labor Digest*, April 1945, Pp49 - 55.

CHAPTER 7

ANONYMOUS BUT ACTIVE: RANK AND FILE WOMEN

When I came into it I was an ignorant girl.
Cecilia Shelley, 1981

Another myth at work

Workers' Advocates could not have achieved their aims without workers' assistance. Despite current ideology fostering the belief that their jobs were temporary, women unionists strongly combated the idea that therefore their wages and conditions did not matter. Although many married, leaving paid work and the union, they did not consider this a compelling argument for condoning poor working conditions. Rather, they enthusiastically embraced industrial action to achieve change.

The mythology surrounding women's paid work was reinforced by the traditional view of women workers as compliant, acquiescent towards employers and apathetic about industrial organisation. [1] Even women trade unionists were considered unlikely to be active. However, rank and file women's behaviour belies the claims.

Many activists remain anonymous, making their contribution at mass meetings to discuss industrial grievances, joining unions, attending stop work meetings and withdrawing their labour as part of industrial action.

At times such women took the initiative in establishing or joining a union, successfully putting themselves forward as officials on union executives. Their names were recorded when they served on an executive (see Appendix 1), appeared as witnesses in the Arbitration Court or were arrested during militant industrial action. Although most women performed a vital role as group members rather than as individuals, their contribution was essential to the women workers' cause.

Women's reasons for becoming industrially active

Wages and conditions were amongst the most immediate catalysts for women's politicisation. Women's appreciation of their situation gave them an incentive to question their working conditions and when combined with politicisation, leadership or a specific grievance, to effect change.

Levels of enthusiasm and activism amongst union members varied. Personal factors were important, but should not be overestimated, as a reasonably familiar pattern of organisation occurred. Sometimes the level of involvement depended on occupation; other factors were the union hierarchy's responsiveness to women members, and its success in improving working conditions.

Less clear is the effect of geographic location. Difficulties associated with travelling between Fremantle on the coast and the capital, Perth 12 miles inland, were often commented upon by organisers with responsibility for workplaces in both. Differences between the two locations were marked. Fremantle was usually a source of successful negotiation and union activities - from forming unions to conducting fundraising functions. Perth union activities were less successful.

Members of the HCCTRIUW became particularly active when Shelley became a paid organiser. This suggests that leadership was a determining factor in the increased activity but does not provide the whole explanation. As domestic workers in the boarding house, hotel and cafe industry, HCCTRIUW members might have been expected to be the most difficult to organise. The nature of the women's jobs and their isolation from fellow workers, as well as the location of many members in the less radical Perth, all would have militated against industrial organisation. However, they were the most militant of women workers between 1920 and the 1930s.

Working conditions appear to be the catalyst for the jute and hemp workers' decision to organise. At their first meeting in July 1918 they were described as '...conscious to

improve their conditions...[as their] wages and conditions ...were intolerable'. [2] Before they brought their concerted efforts to bear on the situation factory workers were provided few facilities. A lavatory served a number of purposes, including a place for the women to change their clothing and eat their lunches. Similarly, women working in biscuit factories had no lunch or changing facilities and their sanitary conditions were poor. The women also had to work extended overtime despite having their wages docked for each minute's unpunctuality. Their complaints served to bring about an inspection of the factory by a Factories Inspector. Unfortunately no record of the result is available. [3]

Laundry workers, although some of the least well paid, achieved some victories early in the period. [4] McCallum, Secretary of the Council, saw their spontaneous action as, 'a revelation, and an object-lesson to many men in the Labour movement.' [5]

Although women's early radicalism was muted at times they retained their union membership. This is surprising as the Laundry Workers Union was a likely victim of the isolation of their members (partly because of the part-time nature of the work), independent agreements with each establishment and lack of full time union staff. An award made in 1913 was severely limited and a further agreement [6] reached through renewed efforts stimulated by the WO, was limited to four laundries. This suggests two things: that the women were at a serious disadvantage in their particular work place, and that although they were unable to markedly improve their situation they did not hold the union responsible.

Laundry workers' exploitation was acknowledged but levels of retaliatory action fluctuated. For example, although members agreed that the six hour principle should apply to laundries, fear of losing their jobs made them loath to demand the shorter hours. [7] Sometimes caution was well advised as, for instance, a strike against the Monarch

Laundry in 1914 resulted in retaliatory lockouts. [8]

By 1921 40% of the membership was unemployed and part-time work was common. However, Arbitration Court records show that in 1921 Eve Cleverly from the Bondi Laundry was a witness in support of a new Award hearing. This agreement lasted until 1923 when the 1921 Metropolitan Employees Union Agreement defended by Cleverly was retired. [9] Again, in 1927 they were in a wages dispute. [10] On the other hand, the Monarch Laundry's intransigence appears to have been effective when during the Depression the union was unable to find members willing to give oral evidence against the firm in a Court hearing. [11]

Working conditions and lack of representation by the union covering male printers were instrumental in establishing the WAMFPU in 1919. Female printers were often underpaid and no records of payments and hours were maintained. Employers rarely paid overtime and kept no records as the women had no award with which to support and fight any claims. [12]

If women left a job under circumstances which did not accord with an employer's wishes they risked their character note - the only evidence of industry experience on which future wages would be based. Women's exclusion from the apprenticeship system made them even more dependent on the good offices of an employer and the character note. At least one woman who was refused her note approached the union for assistance. [13]

Women's fear of their employers was not ill-founded, dismissals swiftly following when the union was awarded wage increases in 1919. Despite this (or perhaps because of it) the union prospered as it was seen as a successful vehicle for change. [14]

Women covered by the Metropolitan Cleaners, Caretakers and Lift Attendants Industrial Union of Workers objected to the conditions imposed on them in the government and private sectors. Particular concern was expressed wages and conditions variations according to the government department

in which the women worked. [15] As a result, workers' solidarity and determination to win award wages was potentially threatened. However, when the award delivered in mid-1921 had not been observed by early December, members initiated a union approach to write to the Public Service Commissioner. [16]

The resulting fight was not easy for the women, all of whom were employed as cleaners - the lowest status position covered by the union, and one in which the workers were usually isolated. Government intransigence was apparent as they argued that discrimination between workers was justified as the buildings under discussion were different. [17]

An inquiry found that while employed at different locations, a variety of pay rates (all less than the part-time rate) were paid for similar tasks which included chopping wood and cleaning outhouses. These employees were financially ill equipped to question the Government and received only limited support from their union executive. However, when no immediate gains were made the women's determination forced the union to take continuing action. Despite limited resources the cleaners forced their issue on to the agendas of the union executive and government. [18] Their individual letters aimed at achieving some action supports the argument that women were fully aware of themselves as workers entitled to union representation to win improved conditions. [19]

Another reaction to conditions, but with the additional benefits arising from active leadership, is exemplified by workers in the clothing trades. Lack of safety in factories was an important issue and became the basis for a dramatic industrial confrontation. Under the terms of the Clothing Trades Award women had to wear protective headgear, allowing employers to evade responsibility for improving the standards of machine safety.

It was not easy to challenge employers' claims that the onus of responsibility for safety lay with the women.

However they took action through union representatives over six months to establish new safety conditions.

In 1924 Annie Warren and Mr Clapham approached the Minister for Works for assistance. The catalyst for action lay with three young women who had been fined 10/- with 3/- costs for having refused to wear hairnets while working with machinery. By June 27 the *Melbourne Sun* had taken up the issue referring to the women as "Juliets in caps" and commenting on their militancy. [20]

Initially the issue was resolved in the employers' favour - possibly with the tacit approval of men in the industry because women were no longer to be employed on machinery under the agreement. However, this was not the end of the matter. The women maintained their fight and in December the result was reversed when the provision that women should wear hairnets was dropped from the Award. At the same time employers were required to improve machine safety to meet the conditions imposed by the Court on the union's behalf. [21]

This was a tremendous achievement as, in general, working conditions were uniformly unpleasant and the pressures to conform were immense. Kit Cameron, a tailoress during the 1920s and 1930s in WA factories, identified typical conditions as 'Long hours and poor pay ... there was usually no lunch room and workers were lucky if their lavatories were decent...girls just moved from job to job for a change, they didn't find it easy to be in the union to improve things'. [22]

Cameron also commented on her husband's objection to her time consuming union activities. She refused to renounce her right to improve working conditions, explaining, 'I kept up with the union...I enjoyed the fight'. [23] This may have been an isolated reaction, but it does indicate some women resisted traditional family roles taking precedence over their union role.

Labor activists were not the only women to pursue justice for women workers as is demonstrated by isolated

approaches to the labour movement in the early 1900s. Amongst these was a woman who wrote from a small township in the Boulder area. She supported attempts to establish state control of registry offices dealing with employment, appealing to the ALP to 'take some definite steps to remedy this existing evil. I plead for help for those working women who are too weak and helpless to help themselves'. [24]

Having failed to find work through advertising in the *Kalgoorlie Miner*, she tried the registry office and was placed in a position at two pounds a week. The placement cost her one pound but did not prevent her abrupt dismissal to be replaced by a woman qualified in music - a qualification waived upon the original applicant's employment. Although she received one pound for the two days' services and was assured that arrangements had been made with the registry office to refund the fee, this was not forthcoming. [25]

Other sources of concern were conditions in the outback which did not comply with employees' expectations. One complained to the Labor women of arriving at a brothel; another, that she was taken miles from the city to a camp of thirty men with no other women or mistress at the homestead. [26]

Union membership

Joining a union, particularly early in the period, was an ad hoc affair which gave women plenty of latitude to ignore the activities of their more politically active co-workers. Meetings were called in uncomfortable circumstances, with little pressure to attend as women's contribution was often considered irrelevant to "men's business". Competing pressures, such as family circumstances and background, as well as employers' disapproval also militated against women joining unions.

On the other side of the equation, solidarity based on friendship, although difficult to evaluate, was an important factor in bring women together on industrial issues. Women

were dependent on each other for assistance in living on inadequate wages. It seems reasonable to suggest that this flowed over into union solidarity with Shelley's recorded experiences unlikely to be isolated events. [27]

Lack of shop stewards or organisers in factories hampered the organisation of meetings to form unions. To overcome this, notices were published in the newspaper or circulars were distributed outside factories by sympathisers - an uneasy position to take. However, workers' support was crucial to drawing large numbers at union meetings as high profile representatives were rarely available to attract them. Rather, a combination of friendship and enthusiasm for unionisation were important ingredients in women's initial attendance.

In other circumstances close family connections were catalysts, the Shelley sisters providing one of the best examples. Frank Shelley encouraged his daughters, Cecilia, Lena and Norah, to join the HCCTRIUW when they became dissatisfied with their working conditions. Honoria Shelley, their mother, supported them having experienced similar working conditions. At least one of the Shelley boys was involved with the labour movement and knew McCallum when he was Secretary of the Metropolitan Council. Lena and Norah Shelley were elected to the executive when Cecilia became Secretary. [28]

Family connections were also important in the WAMFPU. Miss M. Best and Miss E. Best were members in 1921, and Miss E. Best was on the union executive. Miss H. Healy was a prominent organiser and Miss N. Healy was a witness for the union in the Arbitration Court in 1918. Miss Crabtree and Miss E. Crabtree were both delegates to the Metropolitan Council in 1918 and were still union members in 1921. Misses Alice and Eva Read were part of the printer's strike action in 1927. Miss Alice Raison and Miss V. Raison were prominent union members, Alice from 1917 and V. Raison from 1920. [29]

Reasons for family membership varied. The most likely was the movement of sisters into the same industry and their

politicisation by the same experience. At other times, sisters were likely to join the union or industrial activity to support each other, particularly if one was running for office.

Sometimes women's decision to join a union was related to their general political awareness. For instance, Fanny Eccles, a trustee of the HCCTRIUW in 1914 and 1916, was a member of both the ALP and the non-party WSG. She was a delegate to the First Labor Women's Conference, HCCTRIUW delegate to the 1914 Labor Women's Conference and Speaker at the WSG Women's Parliament. [30]

Workers, although they remain anonymous, were often enthusiastic supporters of unionisation. In 1907 a meeting of dairy workers called with the purpose of forming a union was well attended, speakers from the crowd describing their poor working conditions such as low wages (twenty five shillings a week with keep) and working hours from fourteen to seventeen a day. [31]

In the same year a meeting in the goldfields decided unanimously to form a nurses union. [32] A month later the nurses, with the assistance of the EGWPLL, protested about their long working hours. [33] On Beadle's behest nursing training became an important item on the Labor Congress Agenda, with the resolution that nurses should become trained by the State and become part of the State medical system. [34]

Nurses were not alone in their endeavours to unionise women's work on the goldfields. In 1911 the House Workers' Union was formed with initial assistance from ALP Council members and Beadle. However, a woman known only though her article in the *North Coolgardie Herald* as L.H.S., then took over. She reported that the Houseworkers' Union had been established for three weeks with a slowly increasing membership. However, she was concerned about the lack of time to organise effectively and the prevalence of "blacklegs". She expected other union members to refuse to accept non-union services. [35]

Support from the ALP was one factor in encouraging women's unionisation. In the laundry workers' case this contributed to their spasmodic activity as Beadle, the Metropolitan Council and a male Labor stalwart publicly supported their aims. In addition, the union's newly elected secretary, Elizabeth Clapham, became a Municipal Councillor, giving their leadership additional status. [36] However, none of these matters really explain the tenacity of the women in clinging to their union membership, a facet of their behaviour which demonstrates at least interest in industrial issues and recognition that unionism was an answer to some of their problems.

Sympathy was not always uncritically extended to workers. As early as 1908 a shop assistant pleading the cause of unprotected employees drew a muted response from Beadle. The Goldfields Shop Assistants' Union's efforts to organise shop assistants had been particularly difficult, Beadle suggesting that this arose from the women's desire to be seen as "ladies" and their fear that as unionists they would be considered as "only" women workers.

Earlier, Beadle, together with Labor MLAs, Messrs Dodd and Meeke, had approached the Colonial Secretary to improve shop assistants' conditions. They had sought seating for assistants' use when they were not serving, and requested that shop assistants should be able to leave the premises for their tea breaks, which were compulsory under the Shop and Factory Act. Further, they required that assistants should be recalled only for stocktaking if essential and that overtime should be paid. These requests did not come into effect, although the Colonial Secretary supported the proposals. Shop owners were able to flout the agreement because the shop assistants were not organised and efforts were made to do so. [37]

However, unionised or not, shop assistants were effectively discriminated against. The Eastern Goldfields Shop Assistants and Warehouse Union became embroiled in controversy in 1913 when their representative endorsed

unequal pay. As this was in direct conflict with the principles supported by the ALP condemnation of the union's action was passed unanimously by the State Executive. [38]

Women in the rope and hemp industry were politicised beyond their immediate and internal interests. Mass meetings were held, first in response to Beadle's approach (see Chapter 8) and then under pressure from workers already unionised. Committees were established at several factories and enthusiasm remained high resulting in further well attended meetings and successful fundraising social functions. Jute and hemp workers combined with other unionists in the Eight Hours demonstration and participated in preparation of a case before the Arbitration Court. [39]

Unionisation of the food manufacturing industry in the Fremantle area was one of the most significant successes in the rapidity with which the women organised and their continued support for their union. A committee was formed and a second meeting organised to appoint stewards and enrol additional members. Thirty eight workers met and planned another meeting to prepare a schedule and collect evidence for the Arbitration Court hearing. [40]

By the time the Food Manufacturers Employees Union of Workers was registered the workers' sophistication in union matters led to their invitation by the WO to encourage Perth workers in the industry. However, although a mass meeting was successfully organised and workers unionised, fear of victimisation caused problems. [41]

Women's reaction to employers' threats varied. The jute and hemp workers in Fremantle, when faced with sacking, supported strike action. Perth workers' lack of initial enthusiasm was reflected in their subdued response to antagonism. Poor representation at early meetings became no representation, the forewoman's and foreman's antagonism possibly persuading employees to ignore union activities. Even the WO was subdued in her response to the sacking of the committee, refusing to claim victimisation. [42]

Perhaps this was judicious as, although there were no

re-instatements, improvements in working conditions were made. A lunch room and change room were promised and the docking of pay for one minutes' unpunctuality was changed to give employees travelling by train five minutes' grace. The Chief Inspector of Factories was advised of the poor conditions and arrangements were made for a woman Inspector to make an unexpected visit at an early date. Inspections were also made at other factories in response to workers' complaints. [43]

Employer's Federation antagonism was an additional challenge, their objection to the registration of the union discouraging Perth workers. There was some hope that a change of attitude could be effected by Arbitration Court registration but this was unsuccessful. The A.L.F. jam factory closure led to fear of victimisation and, although the Fremantle union thrived, organisation in Perth remained stagnant. [44]

In 1917 the WAMFPU was established by women in the printing industry as the Typographical Union covered only male printing employees. A motion that a female printers union be established was proposed by Mrs Ladgridge and Miss Healy, workers in the printing industry. A committee established for the purpose conferred with the Printers Trade Union officers and Casson (ALP WO at the time) undertook to interview employees at the printing establishments which were not represented at the earlier meeting.

Officers were elected and rules drafted with assistance from the Typesetters Union. A large group of workers attended further meetings which continued to report new members, donations and the decision to run fundraising functions. The union was registered on 18 September 1917 and Casson elected Secretary. The Women's Organiser Fund was rewarded for its work with a donation of 1/- per member to the Fund.

Union membership fluctuated slightly however by 1920 there were one hundred and four members. In this year women

were accepted into a newly formed union based on the amalgamation of the WAMFPU and the original union which had traditionally covered only men. [45]

Individual approaches to the ALP for assistance suggest that the political wing was more prominent than the industrial organisation. A letter written by Mrs M.M. Glasson, an assistant laundress at the Claremont Teachers Training College, indicates that she saw a union as an answer to her exploitation as a domestic worker but did not know whether she was entitled to seek its assistance. [46] On the other hand, Mrs Glasson's approach was at odds with her co-workers.

The wages and conditions in cafes, boarding houses and hotels were universally poor, women often having no choice but to live in and use meagre wages to pay for sub-standard accommodation and food. Women in these occupations, although often unionists, did not respond to their work experience as radically as women in other occupations visited by the WO. Isolation may have been a factor, however it is more likely that the male Secretary's disinterest in their industrial conditions was paramount. It would also explain Mrs Glasson's uncertainty about her rights. The union hierarchy's lack of concern changed when Shelley became an Organiser, and later, Secretary of the HCCTRIUW. [47]

The replacement of the male secretary increased HCCTRIUW activities to the point that workers became a group of highly politicised women fighting for improvements. The Secretary was difficult to dislodge and meetings held to accomplish this encouraged members to identify reasons to change.

Part of the problem for women in this industry was their perceived "freedom" from some workforce constraints. Women moved from job to job, not because they were frivolous or irresponsible, but because there was nothing to be gained from remaining in the same position. There were no future prospects to enhance their current unenviable situation - one of poor pay and poor conditions. Rather than being in a

financial position in which the women were free to "pick and chose" changing the location of a uniformly poor working environment was seen as an antidote, although a limited one. The conditions and their effect made it even harder to organise the women, as well as giving employers the false impression that women did not need to work. This raised questions about women's desire for permanent work - fulfilling the myth that women's income was only a supplement to the a breadwinner's family wage, rather than a necessary income for a female breadwinner. [48]

Another matter which goes straight to gender discrimination is the threat of sexual harassment in private homes. This would not have been isolated to the story told by the outspoken Shelley, although it is only her information which is available. (See Chapter 9). Many women would have been forced, through economic need and fear, into quietly accepting the treatment or losing their independent income or being forced into different work, such as that in hotels or boarding houses. Although sometimes these conditions were an improvement with reasonable hotel meals and better beds, wages were uniformly low. [49]

Rank and file members played a significant role in successful industrial action in 1921. A strike at the Esplanade Hotel demonstrates the importance of rank and file support to even the strongest leader. Shelley, in her capacity as Secretary, led the action but would not have been successful without the members' sustained support.

Although one of the biggest employers in the industry, the hotel was fully unionised through the efforts of a woman staff member. Members were prepared to take strike action over the dismissal of this worker, demanding her reinstatement. [50]

Further militant action by rank and file women is exemplified by the hotel and tearooms employees strike and subsequent activity in 1925. Shelley was a significant figure in organising the strike and bringing it to a successful conclusion. However, her female supporters'

activities were also important in that they show the extent to which women had become politicised. After initial negotiations were unsuccessful women did not hesitate to join militant action without which their demands were unlikely to have been met. [51]

Hotel employees' dissatisfaction was voiced at well attended meetings and when their claims were rejected a stop work meeting was held. An increase in wages for women cooks was added to the claim after Shelley sought members' approval. A further meeting, attended by 900 hotel, tearoom and restaurant employees, was adjourned upon learning that some shops had not closed. Two hundred women and men left the Trades Hall to seek additional members and 1,450 attended the subsequent meeting.

Three sources of power were used by the women: union membership; meetings; and striking. Some of the meetings were held at night when it is likely domestic duties had to take second place to union activity. Women were amongst the organisers who picketed shops open during the stop work meeting; one added a reference specific to women to the log of claims; and others were not loath to come forward at the meetings. [52] Woman participated in debate from the floor and were strong enough to make points at large public gatherings. That they were expected to make their views public is clear from the presiding officer's recognition in a crowd of over fourteen hundred.

The union's determination to improve women's working conditions did not stop there. Later in 1925 preference to unionists caused a deadlock between employees and employers. Women picketed restaurants that remained open during stop work meetings. Singing and dancing around the tables, the women introduced a unique and novel picketing procedure and, although the use of uncouth language was also reported, it was the former activity which particularly interested the newspapers. [53]

Demands for full pay while on strike also won the HCCTRIUW members wide publicity, which contributed to their

effectiveness in achieving their aims. The strike was successful in that most employers signed a preference to unionists clause, only one refusal to do so being reported in the *Daily News*. [54]

Despite their success in gaining signatories to the clause, further activity took place and the *West Australian* used the women's militancy as a platform to discuss women's working role. The terms in which the industrial activity was reported was significant when considering importance of gender in designating working rights. The *West Australian* reported that 'Perth yesterday was again under the domination of "petticoat government"...a few tearoom girls ordered the comings and goings of thousands of hungry and thirsty citizens...' [55] Continuing with 'militant women challenge customers...' [56] the paper speculated that there may be a need for 'revision of the popular idea as to which is the "weaker" sex'. [57] The *Daily News* maintained this tone, referring to women's "persistence" and "feminine persuasion" and describing the picketers as "determined amazons". Only the allegation that picketers had angrily seized two customers during the height of the activity is at odds with the feminisation of the language. [58]

There is no doubt that Shelley had a pivotal role. However, all the women involved figured largely in newspaper reports, and individuals were also impressed, one letter to the Editor commending the women in charge of organising the strikers against customers' use of black listed tearooms.

A public reply to a non-union women's offer to liaise between the strikers and the employers also took advantage of the letters page. Florence Stuart's response is significant in demonstrating the unionists' political thrust, making the point that the offer did not reflect an understanding of women's demands being embodied in years of work and sacrifice in their fight for the right to unionise and to protect this despite individual difficulties during the struggle. [59]

The strike finished on 3 June, the women maintaining

their militant action until the clause for which they had negotiated had been honoured. Only the "strikers' champion", Shelley, fortitude and black bans imposed by union members persuaded employers of the women's determination to see the clause implemented. [60]

A long term strategy was endorsed to maintain the advantages won through the strike. A proposal to amend the Arbitration Act to provide for cancellation of the licence of any holder guilty of breaches of industrial agreements or awards was put on the agenda for the triennial State Labor Congress. This extended leverage over recalcitrant restaurateurs who may have sought to penalise future workers. [61]

Women unionists were not wholly successful in their fight. The agreement, to be in operation for three years, gave strikers protection against dismissal, a forty four hour week for females and wage rises. However, the protection for strikers against job loss failed.

In addition, employees were persecuted for their role in the strike and those still employed collected in the streets to raise money to compensate the unemployed. One, Kathleen McEntyre, a typist with the HCCTRIUW, was convicted for using abusive language to a male scab. She was fined the maximum amount which could be imposed and had to pay full costs. Legal problems also arose when a strike bomb was thrown during a fundraising activity. However, most collectors were quiet and orderly and the issue quickly died as industrial peace in the industry was re-established. [62]

Women's action in the 1920s to improve their working conditions could hardly be described as insignificant. Women showed that they were prepared to strike, lose their jobs or sustain police convictions in their efforts to improve their conditions. They were eager take individual action as well as follow strong leadership and to support militant activity. Women were also keen publicists of their cause through letters to the newspapers. They supported each other, helping those who suffered job losses, financially.

They were also forward looking and sought to protect employees' futures by seeking arbitration and legislation to enforce workers' claims and agreements.

Barely recorded: women on union executives

Women also worked on union executives, demonstrating their ability and desire to take high profile roles in the labour movement. These women's names are, in the few cases where union records have been kept, known. [63] However, in a few instances there is additional information, often gleaned from women's activities in other capacities.

Women in the HCCTRIUW often joined the union executive. Seven were trustees between 1914 and 1917 - Eccles was a trustee in 1914 and 1916 and Mrs Ellen M. Leo and Mrs Mary Smith became trustees in 1917. In 1920 women achieved greater success - Shelley became Secretary and both her sisters had positions (Treasurer or Trustee) until the 1921 elections. Other women who joined the 1920 executive were Miss Vera Lindlay and Miss Maggie Guille, each of whom served one term. Miss Moira Higgins became Trustee in 1921, retaining her position for some years.

Women in the HCCTRIUW were not always supportive of each other, in seeking positions or in devising strategies, suggesting that they saw themselves foremost as unionists rather than feminists. For instance, in competing for union status, Higgins' rhetoric and enthusiasm for militant action, without first ensuring that the members understood the issues, was compared critically with Shelley's approach. However, the union made improvements in women's working conditions despite, or perhaps because of, different approaches to a similar stimulus.

Pansy Hawkes was the first Secretary of the Cleaners and Caretakers Union established in 1920. Also on the executive were Miss Bessie Heenan as Vice Chairman, and Miss E. Mossop, Treasurer. In 1921 Sylvia Donaldson became Secretary and Mrs Sherwood and Mrs Jones, Trustees.

Donaldson used her executive experience when she become

an Inspector of Factories, maintaining a watchful eye on employers. Realising that there was no award in the cleaning industry she followed up investigations on an annual basis. In 1936 the Shop Assistants' Award was extended to unprotected workplaces. Government attitudes toward women working in the cleaning industry also progressed. In the same year exemptions claimed by employers were rejected on the basis that adults were being paid less than the basic wage.

In the 1923 Cleaner and Caretakers Union elections women were voted into positions of Chairman, Vice Chairman and Trustees. In 1924 the Chairman, Sarah Wearne, became Vice Chairman and Julia Edwards, Treasurer. Wearne remained in her position until 1925 and regained it in 1928 after having been replaced in 1926. Bella B. England became Secretary in this year, along side Rita Isobel Ridley as Treasurer.

When it was established in 1917 the South West Clothing Trades Union elected the following women: Miss May Mullens (Vice Chairman), Annie Warren (Treasurer) and Miss A. Prosser (Trustee). Warren retained her position as Treasurer and Mullens as Vice Chairman in 1918 when another woman, Mrs M. Lynch, won the powerful position of Chairman. However, both lost their positions in 1920 and only one woman featured on the executive in that year, Clara Thompson as Trustee. She retained the position in 1921. In 1923 Mrs L. Caine became Vice Chairman, a position she retained until 1926. In that year Warren became Assistant Secretary and Secretary combined, and Elsie McMahon and Jessie G. Roper were elected as Trustees. In 1927 the executive was dominated by women, Warren as Secretary/Treasurer, Lily Caine as Chairman, Miss B. O'Doherty as Vice Chairman and Roper as Trustee. By 1928 the women's numbers were reduced to two, O'Doherty as Vice Chairman and Roper, once again, Trustee.

Despite the sketchy nature of the information, it can be established that women made a major contribution to

organising their labour through standing for and winning official positions in their unions. This level of activity gave them authority at the same time as demanding a commitment to unionism beyond that of the usual rank and file member. Such a commitment required women to promote themselves as worthy of support in a prominent position as the same time as having the specialist skills required for the position.

Leaders, but what do we know of them?

While executive positions required women to promote their positive features and seek votes, the demands of leadership were even more exacting. They had to overcome prejudice from outside the movement and, at times, from within. Women were often involved in similar tasks to those which occupied men in their political contribution to the movement, but records of their leadership are scant. Public rewards were also limited, contributing to the women's invisibility. Only the exceptional became well known.

Three women who won public leadership positions and were recognised in monetary terms were Beadle, an activist from the late 1890s; Shelley, a trade union secretary from 1920; and Holman, a member of the WA Parliament between 1924 and 1939. Others, whose prominence suggests that they were more than rank and file activists, were less well recorded and acknowledged. Of these, Hooten, Casson and the McEntyre sisters, Helen and Kathleen, stand out. Another, Ivy Pirani, was secretary of the Cleaners, Caretakers and Lift Attendants Union over four years and the Eastern Goldfields Hospital and Asylum Employees Union (EGHAEU) from 1922.

Pirani was secretary of the EGHAEU from its inception in 1922, suggesting that she had a part in its organisation. She eventually shared the position with John Pirani, possibly her husband, as she also had responsibility for the Cleaners, Caretakers and Lift Attendants Union from 1922 until amalgamation with its coastal counterpart in 1926.

Hawkes likewise became Secretary of the Cleaners and

Caretakers Union on its inception, again suggesting that a woman was involved in the organisation of a union. However, none of her activities was recorded. [64]

Women's recognition in labour records and newspaper accounts illustrates the level of political activity, which while less prominent then that of the three acknowledged leaders, was more well developed than rank and file activism. Although neglected in terms of high profile positions in the movement or parliament often women's participation was similar to men's in every day union and party activity.

Inferences can reasonably be drawn from the fragmentary evidence on women leaders. In some cases this is essential. Recognition of rank and file activity presents fewer problems because, although unidentified, numbers increase visibility. Union records, where available, make it clear that others were on union executives. Clues to activity beyond that of membership and executive activity can.only be gleaned from more detailed union records, minutes and newspaper reports. These show that women other than Beadle, Shelley and Holman demonstrated leadership qualities which they put into effect.

Women became delegates at TLC Congresses and other decision making bodies. For example, as early as 1907 women were delegates to the Congress from Labor organisations, including two from the Eastern Goldfields Labor Council. It may not be surprising that Beadle headed an Agenda Committee ballot with men's support. However, that a second (un-named) woman was ahead of well known men such as Mr W.D. Johnson, Mr Jabez Dodd (a union secretary) and McCallum. [65] This woman may well have gone further in the movement in the goldfields without records of her activities being maintained.

Even a women of Henrietta Hooten's calibre appears only spasmodically in ALP records, news items in the *Westralian Worker* and, on occasion in other newspapers. Hooten was a supporter of the WO on her visits to the ALP Councils

reporting on the work undertaken in that capacity. Working with women outside the labour movement, as a member of the delegation of WA Labor Women, Hooten together with representatives from the NCW approached the Colonial Secretary to seek improvements in women's and young people's employment. [66]

The delegation cited problems familiar to women's unions: sweating, lack of lunch and changing facilities, poor sanitary conditions and subcontracting work which led to low wages. Immediate improvements to existing conditions were sought. Long term aims were to be achieved through legislation covering health, safety and general improvements. Hooten made a case for issuing health and fitness certificates to children before they could be employed in particular classes of work, her concerns with these matters arising from her observations at an Arbitration Court Award application case. To ensure adequate protection she asked that factories be inspected monthly and that factory inspectors should be equal numbers of women and men. [67]

Other members of the delegation were Beadle, who requested registration of outworkers, compulsory lunch and changing rooms, compulsory notification of overtime and that a factory should comprise two workers rather than the original six; Frances Ruffy-Hill, who advocated safety measures where machinery was in operation; and Miss Cavanagh who proposed Arbitration Act amendments to include morning and afternoon rest periods. [68]

Higgins, although a long term activist on behalf of female as well as male members of the HCCTRIUW, was sometimes unsympathetic to what she perceived as apathy, often upbraiding women at meetings for their lack of awareness and limited solidarity on union matters. She was a dedicated worker on their behalf, despite her criticism. She was instrumental in dealing with Albany Bells tearoom, organising a strike in 1919 to force the employers into the Arbitration Court. The resulting award was also negotiated

by Higgins. [69]

Beadle was pivotal in developing women's place on the labour movement's agenda. She had unquestioned stature in the Party and non-party women's organisations in WA and, earlier, Victoria. Although unsuccessful in becoming a parliamentary candidate Beadle is the best example of a woman who not only fulfilled the criteria of leadership, but whose work was recorded. Partially this was due to her own sense of history, and descendants who maintained her records. Unlike the women whose histories have been only partially recorded in this chapter, her story can be put together for posterity.

NOTES

1. See also Kate Purcell's paper, "Militancy and Acquiescence Amongst Women Workers" in Burman, Sandra *Fit Work for Women*, ANU Press, Canberra, 1979.

2. Beadle, Report to the Metropolitan Council, Metropolitan Council File No. 211, Woman Organiser Report 25/6/1918.

3. ibid.

4. The *West Australian*, 15 September 1914.

5. *ibid.*

6. Beadle, Report to the Metropolitan Council, 1918, op. cit.

7. ALP Metropolitan Council File No. 32, Laundry Employees 28/4/1918.

8. Arbitration Court Records, AN 195/3 Acc. 1101.

9. *The Western Australian Industrial Gazette* V1 N2 December 31, 1921 and 1923 - 1924.

10. *The Western Australian Industrial Gazette*, 1927.

11. *The Western Australian Gazette*, 1932.

12. WAMFPU Minutes 1917 - 1920, op. cit.

13. Letter to the Woman Organiser, Woman Organiser Report to the Metropolitan Council, ALP Papers, op.cit.

14. WAMFPU Minutes 1917 - 1920, op. cit.

15. This has similarities with the position in government departments under current workplace agreements.

16. Metropolitan Cleaners, Caretakers and Lift Attendants Industrial Union of Workers, Premiers Department Papers, Battye Library.

17. ibid.

18. ibid.

19. ibid.

20. The *Melbourne Sun*, June 27, Evelyn Wood Papers.

21. Un-named, undated paper clipping, Evelyn Wood Papers.

22. Cameron, Kit Interview with Robin Joyce, Union of Australian Women meeting, 1980.

23. ibid.

24. Letter, unsigned, Evelyn Wood Papers.

25. ibid.

26. Beadle, report to the Metropolitan Council, op. cit., 1918.

27. See Chapter 9 for Shelley's experience of family and co-worker solidarity.

28. See Chapter 9.

29. See Appendix 1 and Joyce, 1984 (b).

30. *ibid.*

31. Report, un-named newspaper clipping, Evelyn Wood Papers.

32. The *Coolgardie Miner*, 25 March 1907.

33. The *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 16 April 1907.

34. *ibid.*

35. L.S.H. "The Houseworkers' Union Preference to Unionists and other things", The *North Coolgardie Herald*, March 1911.

36. Reported in the *West Australian*, 1918.

37. Un-named newspaper clipping, 1 December 1908, Evelyn Wood Papers.

38. Report, Evelyn Wood Papers, 6 February 1913.

39. Beadle, Women Organiser Report, Metropolitan Council Papers, ALP Papers 1918, op.cit.

40. ibid.

41. ibid.

42. ibid.

43. ibid.

44. ibid.

45. WAMFPU Minutes 1917 - 1920, op. cit.

46. Glasson, Mrs M.M. Letter to the Metropolitan Council, Metropolitan Council Papers, ALP Papers, op. cit.

47. See Chapter 9.

48. Joyce, op.cit. 1979.

49. Joyce, *op. cit.* 1984(b)

50. Shelley, op. cit., June 1980.

51. ibid.

52. The *Westralian Worker*, undated, Evelyn Wood Papers.

53. Un-named and undated paper clipping, Evelyn Wood Papers.

54. The *Daily News*, 5 May 1925.

55. The *West Australian* 4/5/25.

56. *ibid.*

57. *ibid.*

58. The *Daily News* 24 5/5/25.

59. Stuart, Florence Letter un-named newspaper clipping, Evelyn Wood Papers.

60. Joyce, *op. cit.* 1984 (b).

61. *ibid.*

62. *ibid.*

63. The information for this section is taken from Joyce, *op. cit.* (b). Also see Appendix 2.

64. Joyce, *op. cit.* 1984 (b).

65. "Record of Results", typescript, Evelyn Wood Papers.

66. Joyce, op. cit., 1979.

67. The *Westralian Worker*, 25 October 1918.

68. *ibid.*

69. Shelley, op. cit. June 1980.

CHAPTER 8
WOMEN AS LEADERS: GRAND OLD WOMAN OF LABOR

> We are enthroned in the hearts of men; that is why men use us and pay us half the wages, but we don't want to be enthroned in men's hearts under these conditions.
>
> Jean Beadle, 1909

A Labor woman is born

Beadle was one of the leaders to whom rank and file women, as well as men in powerful positions in the labour movement, responded wholeheartedly. She was born at Clunes, Victoria on January 1 1867. Beadle was the daughter of literate convicts, Selina Sarah Spenser, born in 1848 at Launceston, and George Henry Darlington Miller, born in 1838 at Manchester. On May 19 1888 she married Henry Beadle, an ironmonger by trade and a militant trade unionist. The couple had three children. [1]

Marriage did not limit Beadle's commitment to the labour movement, rather it seems to have enhanced her contribution. Early in her marriage she became actively involved on behalf of striking unionists when Henry Beadle and his fellow workers took industrial action. [2]

In the same year an association was formed to oppose the Federal Constitution Bill which was considered 'too conservative for a new democratic country like Australia' [3] and Beadle joined. Her recognition that women should take part in industrial and social reform then led her into the Victorian labour movement, organising a union of female factory workers and moving into the Party organisation.

By 1890 she had moved into the Party political field she was to work in for over forty years. She joined the forerunner of the ALP, the Australian Labor Federation. Because of her own experience she recognised the important role women could play in party politics and formed the Labor

Women's Organisation. She took a high profile position, representing the Organisation on the Victorian Labor Council (the counterpart of the Metropolitan Council in WA). [4]

When the Victorian Women's Political and Social Crusade (VWPSC) was founded in 1899 as part of the opposition to Federation Beadle became vice-president. After Federation was won the Crusade changed its focus to studying legislation, improving women's conditions and supporting the labour movement.

As happened later in WA, groups focussing on women's issues worked together, radicals joining conservatives on behalf of women. Links were formed between non-party groups such as the Victorian Women's Federation, the NCW and the Women's Progressive League and party political groups - the VWPSC, May Day Movement and Political Labor League.

As a member of the VWPSC Beadle saw her belief that women should hold high profile public positions in operation. One of the Crusade's representatives, Alison Pym, became the first woman on a Royal Commission in Australia - the Royal Commission on Unemployment 1899. [5]

Beadle had close contact with Dr Molony (later a member of the Federal Parliament) and Ben Tillet, an English labour leader who visited Australia in the late 1890s. Later she was to be influenced by Tom Mann through her long term correspondence with him. She also had ties with Vida Goldstein. This contact with high profile visitors of a Labor inclination was continued when she moved to WA. For example, in 1907 she helped the labour movement welcome Kier Hardie on a visit and was closely involved with arrangements for the Ramsay MacDonalds when they came to WA in the same year. [6]

Beadle also had first hand experience of the conditions experienced by women in the clothing trade. She worked in the industry during the 1890s when Henry Beadle was out of work, boycotted by employers because of his union activities. In this capacity she gave particular attention to seamstresses' conditions and assisted the workers in

forming a union. [7]

By the time she left Victoria, Beadle had also been active as Honorary Inspector of Factories as a union appointee, Honorary Secretary to the Footscray Women's Progressive League and organiser of a Houseworkers' Union. With this experience, she was well prepared for her work in the labour movement and the close co-operation between WA Labor women and women's organisations when the family moved there in 1901.

A Western Australian home and politics

From the time she arrived in WA Beadle was active in various women's organisations and the labour movement. She helped form the first permanent Labor women's group in WA: the WPSC at Fremantle.

In 1906 Beadle moved to the goldfields where she helped found the EGWPLL in December 1907. She was president, honorary secretary and delegate from the League to the Eastern Goldfield's District Council. She represented the Council at the Labor Congress held in Bunbury in 1907 and was leader of the Agenda Committee at the TLC Congress in the same year. In 1908 she was auditor for the Eastern Goldfields Council. In 1910 she was again delegate to the Labor Congress, a position she was to hold on a number of occasions. [8]

As well as taking high profile positions Beadle unionised female shop assistants, nurses and dairy workers on the goldfields. She was also very active in the electorate, encouraging people to enrol to vote, giving speeches and making tours to encourage women to vote and to found women's branches of the ALP.

While in the goldfields Beadle maintained her links with Perth. On one of her visits there she approached old people's homes and, although returning to the goldfields, maintained her attempts to improve these facilities. She was a member of the Visiting Committee to Fremantle prison and also retained this responsibility during her absence from

Perth.

In 1911 the Beadles returned to Perth. Beadle's commitment to workers and diffidence at taking personal acclaim for her work was demonstrated through her response to a gift presented to her at her farewell function organised by the Eastern Goldfields Labor Women - she donated the presentation purse of sovereigns to striking woodcutters. [9]

Within a short time Beadle began the Labor Women's Social Club, becoming its first president. In 1912 she presided at the First Labor Women's Conference, afterwards leading deputations to discuss its findings with the Labor Government. Recognising the limitations imposed on many would-be activists through the usual ALP structures of the conference she said:

> [it was] an important event in the lifetime of the Labor Women's Movement. During the seven days' sittings a great deal was learned about the movement generally. Many social and political questions were better understood through hearing the different views of the many delegates, some of whom had never before summoned up the courage to express those views in public...a women's conference helps the movement; it helps at least to educate many women on questions which are of vital importance in the political and industrial world. Such education cannot be acquired in a mixed conference, for the simple reason that sufficient time cannot be devoted to questions which specially concern women. The Women's Conference after thoroughly discussing its agenda paper, could then choose the most able of its delegates to sit on Labor's Triennial Congress and place the views and demands of the women before it in concrete and definite form, the two conferences making a complete and perfect whole. [10]

Beadle played a leading role in the next thirty-two years of the labour movement and ALP on behalf of women, acting as spokesperson on issues such as industrial grievances, equal pay, women's eligibility for parliament, boards and all government bodies, abolition of capital punishment, compulsory military training, sanitary conveniences for women and children in the cities, and maternity payment and care.

Beadle was one of the major figures in the equal pay debate on behalf of women, suggesting that action rather than "pious resolutions" was needed. She encouraged women to join the fight for equal pay on the grounds that it was a right. She also made the point that low wages for women influenced those paid to men - resulting in disadvantages for all workers. [11]

Beadle also saw the need for women to have political equality, debating the case for full citizen rights for women in the public debate held by the ALP in 1913. [12] In all spheres of political activity Beadle demonstrated her capacities as an ardent reformer, a socialist, anti-conscriptionist and feminist.

In 1915 Beadle became a Special Magistrate of the Children's Court and held the position for sixteen years. She was appointed to the Magistrate Bench in 1920, became a Magistrate for WA in 1924 and was a founding member and vice president of the Women Justice's Association formed in 1925. Later she became president, a position she held until 1938, relinquishing it to return to the vice presidency until her death. She was a member of the original KEMH Board and Justice of the Peace for Perth in 1920 and for the State in 1924. [13]

In addition to holding these public positions, Beadle was a welcome member of more conservative women's organisations. For instance, she was a member of the WSG, at the same time as holding socially radical views and maintaining official positions in the ALP. These included delegate to Councils, leader of the Agenda Committee at the

1907 TLC Congress, executive positions and auditor for the Eastern Goldfields Council in 1908.

Despite having left school early to keep house for her widowed father, Beadle was an articulate and well read woman, with an interest in workers' education. In 1915 she assisted together with Mr J. Lutey, the formation of the Workers' Education Association. The Association's first classes were in economics, industrial law and history, [14] issues in which Beadle believed it was essential for women to become as proficient as men. Her term of sweated labour in the Melbourne clothing trade, as well as her observation of the conditions endured by the many women she encouraged to unionise was an added incentive to develop the WA Branch of the Workers Education Association. Her numerous educational activities on behalf of Labor women fully justified her position as vice president of the organisation during the 1920s.

A radical woman

Beadle was also well in advance of current thinking as demonstrated by her opposition to the compulsory clause in a health bill on venereal disease in 1915. In a letter to the *Kalgoorlie Miner* in 1915 she wrote:

> ...Never have I believed that it is in the interest of morality to allow venereal disease to flourish unchecked, nor have I ever thought that prudery, mock modesty, or secrecy could, or would, accomplish anything effective. For many years I have studied the question from various standpoints and discussed it with men and women in private and open conference, composed of men and women, proving my oft repeated contention that I considered the subject was one of public interest and a problem that could only be solved by men and women imbued with the

> highest ideals of health and morals...That compulsory methods have failed in other countries is beyond all doubt; one could quote columns of reputed authorities to prove it. Compulsion is only effective when it is really possible to compel. In the case of venereal disease this is not possible with the majority of the sufferers until the illness has reached a stage when they can no longer hide the effects, and medical authorities are agreed that those infected early in their irregular life are the most potent conveyors of the disease. For one person far advanced in disease whom we succeed in notifying we shall, by compulsion, deter perhaps twenty freshly infected and easily cured people from submitting to treatment. Since all are agreed that something must be done to solve this grave question, why not try the results of free, adequate, effective treatment under conditions to which no stigma is attached, and by the diffusion of knowledge of the serious consequences of this disease? [15]

Beadle brought the plight of women to the attention of her readers, claiming that prostitution could only be addressed by abolition of the unfair industrial system and economic equality for women. [16]

Beadle's forthright approach to the current morality was also reflected in her response to maternity care. Her concern for mothers and their babies, first articulated in Victoria, was replicated in WA. Early in her fight for maternity care she demonstrated that she was in the forefront of thinkers for the time. She demanded that unmarried mothers should be treated equally with married women against opposition from those who supported the notion

that *marriage* rather than *motherhood* should confer benefits. Beadle then took an active role in fighting the proposal that KEMH should have a 'hard and fast rule that [it] must be entirely for the respectable married woman.' [17]

At times, getting satisfactory maternity care for any mothers was difficult. Beadle was in the forefront of the fight for a maternity ward at the Boulder Hospital. Labor women were involved in lengthy confrontation with the Medical Officer and eventually Beadle had to approach her contacts in the ALP, Jack Scadden and Phil Collier, to assist in the confrontation. Adequate maternity care was established after the intervention by the ALP - three years after the women's agitation began. [18]

Beadle was a committed member of the ALP but at times maintained her support for women's causes, even where the two conflicted. For instance, her reputation and ability allowed her to continue as an esteemed member of the ALP despite her criticism of the Labor Government in 1916 over its tardiness on establishing KEMH. She continued working with non-party women's organisations, publicly associating herself with their opposition to the Government's attempt to replace the promised dedicated maternity hospital with a wing of Royal Perth Hospital to be allocated to maternity cases. [19]

Beadle was also an articulate supporter of the Baby Bonus, the subject of a resolution at the First Labor Women's Conference. The Bonus was a payment of five pounds to be made to mothers on the birth of a child. Some critics claimed that women would become mothers with the sole purpose of claiming the benefit. Beadle poured scorn on the idea in an article in 1912 saying:

> Is motherhood a crime and are the women of Australia so prone to evil that they will willingly become criminals for a bonus of five pounds?...motherhood is beautiful, sacred and gracious...wonderful and valuable. [20]

Again Beadle adopted a progressive stance when she argued strenuously against the idea that the bonus should be paid only to married mothers. She had advocated publicly from 1913 that it should be paid to all mothers, married and single. The Council of Churches then approached the Prime Minister protesting against the payment being made for, what were described at the time, illegitimate children. [21] Beadle also criticised a creche which refused admission to babies under six months while their mothers worked. [22]

During World War 1 Beadle played an important part in maintaining links between Labor women, regardless of their stance on conscription. Although she was active in the Anti-conscription Campaign in 1916 to 1917 she was also a member of the Soldier's Reception Committee and its first vice president. When the Labor women's organisations split over the conscription issue, in much the same way as the general branches, Beadle continued to be a sympathetic figure who, despite her own views, was able to keep the women together on other issues. This conciliatory role was one she was to take throughout her career in the ALP. [23]

In this period the extension of drinking hours was also debated. The Labor women asked Beadle to represent them on a delegation to fight the increased hours and to recommend a reduction in hotel and wine shop hours. Her argument against the suggestion that to do so would infringe on people's liberties demonstrated her sense of humour. She said that a 'hundred acts interfered with that, women were not allowed to buy the necessities of life after six o'clock at night; they were not allowed to swear in the streets. Nor was the Vagrancy Act lightly administered in regard to women offenders.' [24]

An organising woman

Beadle was the natural choice when the ALP employed a full time WO in 1915. She had a wealth of experience in the ALP and unions and became an indefatigable worker as the WO in areas in which significantly poor conditions abounded.

She had to make fortnightly reports to the Metropolitan Council, extracts from which show her attitude to the position and its role. One report makes clear that there were a multiplicity of roles associated with the position.

Sometimes success depended upon the publicity associated with successful Arbitration Court hearings rather than on weeks' of hard work. Beadle recognised that although eight members in a fortnight had enrolled in the Clothing Trades Union organisation would be at a standstill until the new award was made public. Working for this award and appearing in the Court [25] was one of her tasks in a week in which she also managed further organising activities.

Each piece of organisation undertaken by Beadle resulted in additional work. For example, when she met with twenty workers during their lunchtime at the Cottesloe Rope Works she then had to assist in the organisation of the union and appointment of officers. [26]

Similarly, soon after the establishment of the WO position the Food Manufacturers Union of Workers was registered with subsequent improvements in wages and hours. As a result of the Fremantle workers' enthusiasm she worked to involve them in encouraging similar mass organisation in Perth.

A meeting was then held at Trades Hall where Beadle and the Perth Branch of the union discussed the schedule agreed to by Fremantle employers. Members and workers were urged to attend and the Metropolitan Council assisted in publicising the meeting. Previously Perth members had met with representatives from factories who had elected shop stewards. It was hoped that the informal meetings held by the Fremantle workers would be duplicated in Perth. By this time, thirty eight members had enrolled and another meeting was scheduled to collect evidence and prepare the case for the Arbitration Court. Beadle was often associated with compiling the material for such cases. [27]

Beadle was instrumental in the nurses' formation of a professional organisation by 1911. As a consequence she

argued successfully for the Labor Council's adoption of the EGWPLL's motion to have nurses trained and their working conditions controlled by the State. Beadle's status in the labour movement is evident from the ease with which the motion was put onto the agenda at the 1908 Labor Congress. In the same year the Goldfields Female Shop Assistant's union was formed. [28]

The tearooms which were to present Shelley with industrial problems in the 1920s were visited by Beadle to effect improvements in workers' conditions but little progress was made initially. After seven visits in a fortnight to the McDonald Cafe she enrolled only six employees with the HCCTRIUW. Visits were also made to Plaistowes, Albany Bells and Hunts Biscuits and Jam factories at lunch times and at the end of shifts. These visits led to the successful formation of unions. [29]

A time and energy consuming task undertaken by Beadle as WO was the enrolment of twenty eight women from a variety of factories and jobs in the Clothing Trades Union. They included tailoresses, dressmakers, white workers, milliners and shirtmakers. However, Beadle was less successful in enrolling more shop assistants as her account of a tiring round of organisational duties ended on a despondent note about the lack of support or even interest. [30]

Although hampered by poor funding, Beadle was able to establish unions to cover food manufacturing and the rope, hemp and bag works industries. She initiated and supported the organisation of the Food Manufacturing Employees Union, the Biscuit Making and Confectioners Union and the Bagmakers and Jute Workers Union. As well as establishing unions the work of the WO stimulated organisational activities in the HCCTRIUW, Clothing Trades Union and the SAU. [31]

Although Beadle won many successes in a range of areas, like every activist in the labour movement she had to deal with employee apathy combined with employers' antagonism to unionisation. Other activities which involved a great deal of time were signing up members in the Laundry Employees

Union, visiting laundries to collect contributions, organising fundraising social occasions and maintaining personal links with the workers in each institution. [32]

As an experienced Factory Inspector, and well read in industrial legislation, Beadle brought the provisions of the Factory Act to bear against exploitation of women workers. In the Monarch laundry she was successful in undermining plans to make employees work shifts from early morning, with the second shift finishing late at night, to avoid paying over-time. The legislation which prevented women working these hours was not used to advantage the women, however, as boys over fourteen could be employed from 5.00 p.m. to 9.00 p.m. The laundry took advantage of this and women were prevented from working over-time as well as being robbed of the second shift. [33]

Beadle was instrumental in disbanding the WO position when she advised the Metropolitan Council that the job was complete for the time being. Although no longer in the position she remained involved in industrial activity, continuing to work on matters such as workers' compensation legislation. [34]

Depression and activism

During the Depression Beadle became Treasurer of the West Perth Relief Committee which had particular responsibility for mothers and children suffering the effects. She was also a trusted adviser to young people seeking work in the area. [35]

Once again Beadle adopted a radical approach to women's position. While women were being forced out of the workforce Beadle was emphatic that they were entitled to work, despite the economic conditions. Rather than adopt the idea that the male breadwinner should have the available work she promoted women's rights, foreshadowing the assumptions made at the Economic Summit referred to at the beginning of this thesis.

In her support for women who worked outside the home Beadle did not forget homemakers, saying that she meant no

denigration to those women, although she did suggest that they were unlike '...women who are able to look a little farther'. [36] In this speculation she foreshadowed some of the issues which arose for feminists in the 1970s and afterwards.

In this period Beadle continued to be very active in the ALP, becoming president of the newly formed Labor Women's Central Executive in 1930 and in 1931 standing, unsuccessfully, as a candidate for pre-selection for the Senate. [37]

Beadle was not only highly regarded in the labour movement many accolades being recalled in newspaper articles of the time. In 1928 the *Westralian Worker* spoke of her ensuring the success of the Women's Conference held that year, noting that, 'Throughout her rule was one of generous sympathy and patience and she was as calm and self-possessed at the finish of the conference as at the beginning. [38]

Recognition of Beadle's talent was not limited to her Labor compatriots. The *Truth* newspaper referred to her as being a more able "chair-lady" than the average male voted to command a meeting. [39] In 1908 the *Barrier Truth* described Beadle as an energetic and self sacrificing worker for women and children. She was seen as being naturally of a retiring disposition and a woman who would prefer home life but, sensing the need for education and organisation amongst women, she was compelled to work outside the home. [40] This sentiment illustrates the problems even admirers had with those women who moved outside the traditional sphere of women's influence and activity.

In addition, such activism was not always approved; Beadle was also subjected to scathing public comment at times because of her activities on behalf of the labour movement. In September 1908 the *Sun* referred to her as 'a tough snag to bump against in any argument reflecting on the newly arrived woman politician.' [41] The *Sun* also criticised her work in the electorate of Menzies in 1908 saying, 'Mrs Beadell (sic)...the frantic female who casually

holds forth on Kalgoorlie platforms about her disregarded and down-trodden sisters, is also in evidence...couldn't Mrs Beadell stop home and mind the baby? [42] The *Westralian Worker* saw it differently, noting:

> 'Mrs Beadle's knowledge of the Labor movement and its relation to the politics of this country, combined with her well-known organising ability have done wonders for the women...not satisfied with [vigorous discussion of the pros and cons of the election] she would not rest until she forced Messrs Angwin MLA and Geo. McLeod (much to the discomfit of at least one of them) to address those assembled on questions of the hour.' [43]

Like the women in the women's movement today, Beadle was aware of the need to encourage young women to become associated with her work. A letter sent to a "young comrade" and made available to the *Westralian Worker* was printed, in part, as a broader incitement to the young to join the labour movement. The warmth of her approach, demonstrating as much awareness of the young as her more experienced companions, is clear from the tone of her letter:

> I know, Greta, you will gladly take up the unfinished work of your older sisters. Many of us women, Greta, have grown old in the work of making better conditions for others, less fortunate. We soon must pass away. We know that much of the work we have started must be left unfinished. Many of the reforms we have worked for, and so earnestly desired to see consummated, will, I fear, still be in the future when the call comes for us to "pass over". So, dear comrade, we look to you and your young fellows, to take up our unfinished work and see that our hopes and struggles were not in vain.

> In spite of all we have done, and are doing, much work will be left to you. You will therefore [need to] get ready. Education is a wonderful weapon. Your opportunities are greater than ours. Use them, Greta. Acquire all the knowledge possible, not only for the pleasure it will bring in the acquiring, but for the wonderful amount of good you can do for others. I have wanted to write this letter for weeks but my life is such a busy one, it is so hard to crowd in just an extra letter. [44]

Jean Beadle died on May 30 1942 after a lifetime dedicated to women and the labour movement. A Guard of Honour was formed by the KEMH and many welfare groups with which she had been closely associated throughout her lifetime. Members of the Labor women's groups followed the mourning coaches. The people of Clunes sent a tribute: 'Clunes is proud of you'. Beadle's death was also commemorated by a special section of the *Westralian Worker* in which Prime Minister John Curtin expressed his admiration in a message quoting Alexander Pope:

> Here rests a woman, good without pretence,
> Bless'd with plain reason, and with sober sense...
> So unaffected, so composed in mind,
> So firm, yet soft; so strong, yet so refined. [45]

NOTES

1. White, Kate op. cit.

2. Joyce, *op. cit.* (a)

3. Beadle, "Reminiscences of the Labor Movement", typescript, 1928, Evelyn Wood Papers.

4. ibid.

5. Joyce, *op. cit.* 1984 (a)

6. Beadle, op. cit., 1928.

7. ibid.

8. Joyce, *op. cit.* 1984 (a)

9. Joyce, *op. cit.* 1984 (a)

10. Beadle, "Women's Labor Movement", op. cit.

11. Joyce, *op. cit.* 1984 (a)

12. *ibid.*

13. Joyce, *op. cit.* 1984 (a)

14. The *Kalgoorlie Miner*, October 2 1915.

15. Quoted in Joyce, Robin (ed.) *Social Images*, ALP Canberra, 1991.

16. Joyce, *op. cit.* 1984 (a)

17. Beadle, "Just Some Memories", May 1937, Evelyn Wood Papers.

18. Joyce, *op. cit.* 1984 (a)

19. *ibid.*

20. Un-named newspaper clipping, 27 September 1912, Evelyn Wood Papers.

21. Beadle, "Just Some Memories", op. cit.

22. Beadle, Notes, Evelyn Wood Papers.

23. Joyce, *op. cit.* 1984 (a)

24. The *Kalgoorlie Miner*, July 31 1910.

25. Beadle, Report to the Metropolitan Council, op. cit., 1918.

26. See Chapter 7 for details.

27. Joyce, *op. cit.* 1984 (a)

28. Joyce, *op. cit.* 1984 (a)

29. *ibid.*

30. Beadle, Report to the Metropolitan Council, op. cit., 1918.

31. Joyce, *op. cit.* 1984 (a)

32. *ibid.*

33. *ibid.*

34. *ibid.*

35. Joyce, *op. cit.* 1984 (a)

36. Beadle, Report, un-named news clipping (probably the *Westralian Worker*), Evelyn Wood Papers.

37. Joyce, *op. cit.* 1984 (a)

38. The *Westralian Worker*, 1928.

39. The *Truth*, 17 February, 1907.

40. The *Barrier Truth*, 8 May 1908.

41. The *Sun*, 13 September 1908.

42. The *Sun*, 15 November 1908.

43. The *Westralian Worker*, November 20 1908.

44. Joyce, *op. cit.* 1979.

45. "Grand Old Woman of Labor", The *Westralian Worker*, 1942.

CHAPTER 9
A COMPASSIONATE MILITANT

> The girls' were still in my corner...the true story was never told, the employers' story to the newspaper was accepted but the conditions under which the girls lived, with rats running over them in bed and the boss in total control was never told.
>
> Cecilia Shelley, 1980.

Shelley, unlike Beadle, spent only a short period in the political wing of the labour movement. Nonetheless she was one of the most colourful women working in the WA labour movement from the early 1900s to the 1960s. Her major Party involvement was through the WA Organisation of Labor Women, the Perth based women's branch of the ALP. In 1925 she left the ALP because of her commitment to the Seaman's Union strike. Her strong objections to the ALP's proposed resolution of the dispute produced a fiery debate at the 1925 Labor Conference and led to her resignation. From this time Shelley's efforts were directed entirely towards women in their capacity as workers rather than the wider aspects of discrimination.

Family background, experience and an ALP mentor contributed to Shelley's success in the labour movement. However, none of these circumstances can fully explain her successful career as Secretary of the HCCTRIUW, leader of "Shelley's Army", one of the first women candidates for the National Executive of the ALP, an office bearer in the WA Organisation of Labor Women, member of influential committees, feared opponent in the Arbitration Court and candidate for pre-selection to the Senate in 1924. Her vitality, compassion, militancy and understanding of the workers she represented made her an outstanding union leader, a powerful advocate and a strong antagonist in confrontations on behalf of the HCCTRIUW. [1]

A family tradition

Shelley was born in Adelaide on 3 March 1893, to Frank and Honoria Shelley, the sixth child in a family of nine. The Shelleys moved to WA in 1897, living first at Esperance and then moving to the goldfields. Unlike many families who lived apart, mother and children on the coast and father on the goldfields, the Shelleys separated only for the journey to the fields. Honoria Shelley and the children travelled by boat to Albany and then by train; Frank Shelley went overland by wagon. On their arrival in Boulder they moved into a small but fairly good quality house in the main street. They moved between the coast and Boulder and when Shelley was about sixteen years of age the whole family returned to the metropolitan area permanently. [2]

The Shelley parents exerted an important influence on their children as both were strong, politically aware and in some ways demanded fairly strict adherence to their authority. Both were staunch Labor supporters as Shelley recalls them dancing around the backyard when Phil Collier became Premier. Her recognition that there was a need to fight for social and economic justice and sympathy with unionism were based on her family experiences before she entered the workforce. Although she claimed to be an ignorant girl when she met her mentor in the labour movement, McCallum, her background prepared her to meet the challenge he offered. [3]

Honoria Shelley was Irish, a practising Catholic in whose footsteps the children followed until adulthood. Although remaining committed to her family, Shelley had little to do with the church after she began work. Experience reinforced her concerns about Catholic influence in the labour movement which culminated attempts during the 1950s to force her out of the HCCTRIUW. Although successful in thwarting the Groupers she believed her earlier suspicions to have been justified. [4]

Shelley differed with her mother over religion but admired her approach to life as the wife of a poor but

independent worker and mother of nine children. Shelley claimed that Honoria Shelley's commonsense attitudes were influential in helping her develop personal attributes essential for her own union work. [5]

Although not political in the sense of Shelley's eventual achievement, it seems that Honoria Shelley had an awareness of party politics as well as those developed through her own experiences. Shelley remembers her mother's criticism of Prime Minister Bruce during the 1930s and was well aware that she was a Labor supporter. She also recalls her mother's contribution to her daughters' assertiveness in activities traditionally seen as masculine. Honoria's own work in hotels gave her an understanding of the conditions Shelley fought to change. She also identified with Shelley's ambitions for women in the catering and hotel industries since she had suffered under like conditions. [6]

Shelley remembers her parents' long and contented marriage. However, their separation when Honoria Shelley took the children to the city so as to remove the boys from Boulder and the possibility of their having to become miners, demonstrated the realities of women's economic inequality. Shelley's first hand experience of men's greater economic power occurred when her mother attempted to support the family alone. Reliance on a female wage, rather than the male breadwinner's income to which they had been accustomed, must have been a salutary experience. Shelley's support for equal pay and conditions for working women is not difficult to explain in these circumstances. Honoria Shelley's income was supplemented by her husband's wages for some time. However, when this financial help was reduced to one pound a week the situation became intolerable. The rent was 6/- a week, meals were reduced to bread and tea and there was little bedding. Under these conditions the separation ended, mother and children returning to Boulder. Frank Shelley had used his economic power, limited though it was, to enforce their compliance. [7]

Shelley recognised that discriminatory practices

rendered women economically unequal and her future work was based firmly in this knowledge. She was also sensitive to class differences which affected both male and female workers. Her brothers' reliance on work in the mines, the only jobs open to them after the Shelley cordial business collapsed and lack of education and location left them with few options, contributed to her class consciousness. [8]

Shelley accepted her father's behaviour as a normal part of a worker's life, explaining his few bouts of drunkenness as probably due to '...never having had a bob to rub together and nine children to support'. [9]

Frank Shelley was of Irish and English parentage, changing his name from the Irish "Sheehy" to Shelley to avoid the racially based discrimination suffered by Irish workers. [10] He was a cordial maker by trade, related to a branch of the Shelleys who were in the aerated waters business in South Australia, but working independently. He was dismissed when he attempted to unionise the factory in which he worked and the family moved to WA.

Shelley's WA aerated water business was initially successful but eventually closed and Frank Shelley began work at the brewery. [11] His unionist sympathies were unabated by the excursion into small business as Shelley remembers him as thoroughly dedicated to the labour movement and an agitator on the behalf of his fellow workers. Shelley's influence stood his daughter in good stead when a representative of the Nationalist Party attempted to win her support during an election campaign. Shelley was not interested, she was '...a Labor person...I knew my father was Labor...and our family was Labor'. [12] The Nationalist '...had no hope in the world' [13] despite her persistence and her encouragement to Shelley's employer to use his industrial power on behalf of the Nationalists.

Because of Frank Shelley's low wage (three pounds a week) the children were forced to leave school early. The boys worked in the business until its collapse and the girls went into domestic occupations, as did the majority of

unskilled female workers in the period. Shelley left school in fifth form as there was no high school but also, she says, she would have had to work anyway. Her memory of school was, 'Prayers, prayers, prayers' [14] and few school books because of the family's poverty. When she left school she could, '...read, write indifferently and spell well'. [15] However, her lack of formal education was complemented by her father's knowledge of history and literature which he discussed with the children.

Shelley's short-lived marriage, like most of her initiatives, was a response to labour politics. Robert Jack Boniface, who was to become her husband, was attacked by strike breakers and Shelley (seeing this as a high recommendation) seems to have joined forces with him. She did not give up her surname, but combined the two for a short period, dropping "Boniface" when the marriage ended. Publicly, the main influence of the marriage was Shelley's relinquishment of the secretaryship of the HCCTRIUW for three years. During this period her husband was Secretary and Shelley President. Although she had given up the more influential position for three years this had little affect on Shelley's status in the union: it was Boniface who disappeared from the union records when the marriage collapsed. Shelley returned to the Secretary's position to deal with the increasing problems faced by employees' representatives through the thirties. [16]

Working conditions provide a catalyst

Shelley's initial involvement in the movement was a direct consequence of her father's suggestion that they join the union when she and her sisters complained about conditions in the catering trade. They were angry about their inability to effect any changes and this was the women's first intimation that a union existed to protect them. Shelley attended union meetings and subsequently became an Organiser. [17]

Working conditions provided Shelley with a thorough

knowledge of the circumstances with which she had to contend. She knew that the women had attempted to organise and as a consequence had been victimised. She was also aware of the union Secretary's shortcomings as he failed to provide protection for women members. Shelley learnt to understand the women, her own lack of formal education alerting her to the realisation that they might be slower to respond to written information than word of mouth. From her own experience she realised that the union needed a higher profile. In addition, recognising women's twofold responsibilities in paid work and at home she rejected others' criticism of women as apathetic. [18]

Shelley effectively drew women into union activities. Her understanding of their position was invaluable, ensuring that meetings and negotiations were publicised through channels with which the women were familiar and that women were encouraged to present their cases to the Arbitration Court. Her early work in country hotels in Meekatharra and Katanning was also useful in her later country organising trips. [19]

As was discussed in the WO section of Chapter 5 of this thesis, domestic workers in private homes presented a major problem to Organisers and various attempts were made to bring them under the auspices of the Arbitration Court. However, Shelley's main contribution to their organisation seems to have been the possibility that she contributed to the debate which resulted in the formulation of the Labor women's resolution at the 1925 Conference seeking organisation of workers in private homes. This was unsuccessful as there was no Organiser with a commitment, and more importantly, the time, to move into new areas and the women remained largely unprotected.

Although Shelley spent some time working in a private home, and was therefore aware of the problems faced by such workers, she concentrated her energies in the fields already unionised, ensuring that as many women as possible became members. Women covered by the HCCTRIUW were employed in

boarding houses, hotels, restaurants and tearooms a domestic staff, waitresses, maids and cooks. [20]

When she was fifteen Shelley entered the paid workforce as a kitchen maid in a Boulder boarding house, waiting on the miners for whom the house had been established. She arose at 5 o'clock in the morning to cut lunches, working a ten or eleven hour day, seven days a week. Her wages were twenty five shillings a week, with no provision for board or meals. [21] Her experience was unlike those she encountered in the city as, although she was busy, she enjoyed the work and the atmosphere.

After moving to Perth Shelley began work in a private home. She was responsible for general housework and cooking, receiving a small wage, bread and honey for meals, a room with a candle for lighting and a dish for washing as the bathroom was for the exclusive use of the owners. She was given no free days, which seems to have been typical in the occupation. [22]

Shelley's first industrial rebellion took place in another private home. Although she was prepared to do what she considered a fair day's work, she would do no more. She gave notice, refused to scrub the floor on a day already full with spring cleaning and confronted her employer when her wages were withheld. Not only did she rebuke her employer over the poor working conditions but at her mother's suggestion went to a lawyer about the unpaid wages. Although the lawyer was not sympathetic to servant's rights Shelley persuaded him to approach her former employer with a demand for her wages. This was successful. [23]

Another experience in this position also contributed to Shelley's awareness of sexual abuse. In this instance, a Member of Parliament colleague of her employer phoned and having ascertained that she was alone, invited himself to the house. Shelley's reaction to his sexual approaches was characteristic. She was incensed and said of the incident, 'I might have been an orphan girl without any self respect who need affection and had fallen for his line! The

orphanages of those days were full of girls who had been sent out to service and they'd come back pregnant, to keep the orphanage going'! [24] Personal knowledge of such experiences were also a factor in Labor women's concerns for young women in country work which left them alone without female company.

Later Shelley worked in metropolitan and country boarding houses and hotels. As a consequence of her ability to work hard, and her personality, she was able, at times, to defend co-workers without suffering the consequences. At one job Shelley risked her own position so as to support a woman she believed had been mistreated. Creating a commotion in the hotel dining room by throwing glasses and shouting she succeeded in embarrassing the person in charge. However, she retained her job as the hotel manager respected her ability to work hard and encourage custom.

An example of solidarity between women with the objective of improving working conditions was recorded by Shelley in her fourth job. The tearooms in which she worked often remained open until midnight and only one small meal was served during the day between 11 a.m. and closing hours. Not only were the hours long but they included unpaid overtime and wages were a mere 22/6 per week. From this wage the women were expected to provide their uniforms as well as pay the usual expenses of travel, rent, meals and clothing. It was probably the more immediate demand, hunger, which the women wished to satisfy in following the lead of one worker, Lil, who encouraged them to stop work for a piece of bread and butter and cup of tea. Although it was thought very daring, the habit was established and accepted by the manager. [25]

Lil remains an unknown champion of women's rights. However, Shelley who supported her, did not forget the lesson that workers could establish demands and possibly have them met. On the other hand, she was also aware of the tremendous power exerted by employers on women isolated from their families, fully dependant on their own wages and, even

more importantly, forced into occupations which offered little security or encouragement to unionisation. [26]

Like so many women in these occupations, Shelley moved from job to job because loyalty to an employer did not increase workers' prospects, conditions were uniformly poor and changing jobs was seen as an antidote. Even in boarding house or hotel work the young women received only half a day free and this contributed to the peripatetic nature of their work habits. One of the most important reasons for this was that it provided the only opportunity to spend a day in with their family or to sit in the park. [27]

Political framework

The issue which paved Shelley's way into the leadership of the HCCTRIUW was conscription. Although in retrospect she remembers World War 1 as a trade war in which the workers gained nothing, at the time she found it hard to understand. Her initial attitudes were informed more by personal experience than theory and reflected her basic humanitarianism and antagonism to what she consistently referred to as "the ruling class". [28]

Shelley's later opposition to conscription was anticipated in her attitude to the Khaki Army, an organisation of uniformed women who arranged recruitment meetings. Her experience of trainloads of young men leaving Boulder, many forever; the letters she received from a young Meekatharra friend who wrote describing the realities of the trenches and her work in a tearoom where every day someone's boyfriend, father or brother was killed, made her contemptuous of the Khaki Army's poor speeches and their intent. [29]

By the time the second conscription referendum was held, Shelley had become politically involved, attending campaign speeches on the Perth Esplanade and handing out pamphlets. When she heard about the Russian Revolution she was thrilled and described herself as walking on air. She collected money for the Russians and attended meetings where

Labor people such as Percy Trainer spoke. Her initial thrill that labour speakers were socialist turned to disappointment and she later deplored the fact that their ideas changed over time. Trainer, she claimed, '...got respectable and gave it away'. [30]

Shelley's involvement escalated and broadened to include the ALP when she joined her brothers in responding to Labor's call for assistance in an election campaign. McCallum, who was to become Shelley's mentor, was drawn to her attention by her brothers. They described him as a significant player in Trades Hall politics and essential to redeeming the situation at Trades Hall where controversy over conscription had depleted membership and diminished union activism. [31]

Shelley was interested as, having become an Organiser in her union, she was keen to pursue improvements in the badly organised and poorly rewarded industries it covered. The Secretary was pro-conscription, kept few records for evidence with which to conduct cases in the Arbitration Court and had done little to increase membership or defend against dismissal those women who joined. [32] Shelley agreed with her father's contention that the only way to get anything was to fight for it. [33]

A labour mentor

Shelley met McCallum at an opportune time. Her outspokenness on the Secretary's failings and demands that more information be given to members won her the sympathies of many rank and file members. This did not go unnoticed by the union hierarchy but her particular appeal amongst women stood her in good stead on first becoming an Organiser in 1919 and in 1920 when she nominated as Secretary.

McCallum was keen to find a replacement and for the current union Secretary as they were in conflict over conscription and union strategies. He and Shelley met several times before they joined forces in making Shelley Secretary, at the Trades Hall and later when she was

distributing how to vote cards in Barrack Street. McCallum offered Shelley a lift in his car - this she accepted with alacrity as she had never driven in one before. McCallum encouraged her to stand for Secretary of the HCCTRIUW, tutored her on union organisation and participated in her union activities during this early period. [34]

However, it seems that Shelley's natural talent was also significant. She recognised that workers' dissension had to be channelled into concrete action so as to achieve industrial improvements and Shelley organised to take into account special conditions affecting women employees. She admired another activist, Higgins, but disagreed with her methods. Although acknowledging Higgins as a good agitator she was critical of her inability to turn disorganised reaction into union action to win long term benefits. [35]

Shelley was also able to take up the opportunities offered through increased membership arising from labour unrest after the war when at times well over 100 members met.

Shelley's successful nomination for Secretary was made after she defended a woman who had been victimised by her employer. The union did not retaliate and Shelley demanded to know why the case had been ignored. The crowded meeting at which her complaint was made, making it clear that she was willing to work on behalf of the victim, rapidly became enthusiastic about the cause. Debate crossed gender lines so that, as Shelley reported, '...even a fat old cook who couldn't stand women...' [36] supported her resolution that the Secretary should be sacked.

The move was successful and nominations were called for the position. It was not sought by the usual applicants, aspiring politicians. Such people usually saw the unions as a way in which they could become prominent in the labour movement as union secretaries were advantaged in pre-selections because of their close contact with members, all of whom had voting rights. However, not many ambitious young men wished to be associated with the waitresses, a notably

difficult group to organise. The field was left to Shelley, Higgins and the incumbent. Each had a fairly high profile in the union, either through rank and file activity, or as in the incumbent's case, having been in the position for several years.

Higgins was a devout Catholic, which Shelley suspected placed limits on her commitment to organising labour. However, she was a strong unionist and won other union positions. She was also active in the goldfields branch of the union at the same time as Shelley worked in the branch, indicating that relations between them did not remain strained after the ballot for Secretary.

In canvassing support, Shelley chose to emphasise her skills in determining how far the members could be persuaded to take radical action without alienating them. She had a strong personal following based on her supporters' belief that she was working on their behalf rather than for self aggrandisement. By relying on her experience as a worker in the field and commonsense she was able to take on the onerous and politically sensitive work of encouraging women to contribute to union activities. She was particularly successful in calling out women in the 1919 strikes by approaching them personally. Her realisation that only limited support could be won through newspaper advertisements encouraged her to find a new approach. She was also convinced that what was seen as apathy on the women's part was in reality a product of their working environment rather than their lack of interest in demanding industrial improvements.

Their opponent, already involved on the union's behalf in negotiations on award conditions under dispute in the Kalgoorlie catering case, showed himself a poor proponent of unionists' aims. He supported employers' claims that shops should be open on public holidays, arguing that customers should not be deprived of services. This, with his past record of inactivity made him an unattractive candidate. [37]

Shelley won the ballot, due to a combination of

factors. Her swift and sustained success in the union demonstrates the members' decision to endorse Shelley was based on a valid appraisal of her personal and political qualities. Another important issue was the support given her by McCallum, Alex Panton and other ALP members. Both McCallum and Panton were well placed in the movement, McCallum as Secretary of the Metropolitan Council and Panton as a trustee. It is likely that they were able to exert tremendous influence. However, this should not be overestimated as rank and file voting should have favoured the incumbent if he had the approval of members. McCallum's greatest contribution was probably the use of his political acumen on Shelley's behalf, both in helping with her organisational skills in the union's work and the conduct of her campaign. Most importantly Shelley was an outstanding person, not without her own political acumen, well informed and willing to work hard and she had demonstrated at meetings that she could provide an important focus for action to achieve improvements within the union and in the workplace. [38]

Industrial Advocacy

Shelley's industrial activity took place inside and outside the Arbitration Court. Her work as an Advocate had a twofold benefit - at the same time as arguing her members' rights she indirectly questioned the gender bias in the Court and the strength with which she pursued her advocacy helped undermine an interpretation of women as compliant or weak.

In one case the Employers' Advocate questioned the reliability of a witness for the HCCTRIUW by commenting on her living arrangements. It was implied that because a woman cohabited with a man to whom she was not married her evidence should be disregarded by the Court. Shelley retaliated by addressing the lawyer on the same ground and took him up on his past. Although this too was quite irrelevant to the industrial issue it had the desired effect

of totally disconcerting him and may have had some long term effect on the way in which HCCTRIUW witnesses were treated in the Court. [39]

Shelley's reputation led '...one bloke to say that he was not going down there, you never know what this Shelley is going to say'. [40] In another instance, her comments on the SAU Secretary, a "bosses bloke" made him a figure of fun in the Court. Government Inspectors were told that they should emulate Shelley in their efforts in the Arbitration Court which suggests that workers' representatives were expected to use all their powers of persuasion and fighting spirit convince the Court their demands were legitimate. [41]

Although she was at the top of the union hierarchy as a Secretary, appeared in the Arbitration court, participated in negotiations and organised and spoke at meetings, Shelley played an important part in militant rank and file action. Before reaching the Court, workers needed to be persuaded that they had a case and Shelley was adept at achieving this. Her ability to focus workers' resentment as a consequence of mistreatment of a worker was demonstrated by the organisation of industrial action in 1921 at Esplanade Hotel.

Perhaps Shelley's intensity was reinforced by personal animosity toward the hotel owner, previously one of Shelley's employers who had already upset her because of his over-familiarity. Although she could not be described as a feminist fighting sexual harassment her automatic response was resentment at the liberties an employer felt he could take with employees. She realised that he not only had power over her labour but over her body and further claimed that he, 'was the type of employer who would sack a woman whose face he did not like'. [42]

The strike lasted six months and eventually resulted in the sale of the hotel at a price lower than the market value. Despite gaining no other satisfaction Shelley was fully supported by her members, blaming the newspapers for hiding employers' treatment of them. [43]

The prolonged industrial action gave Shelley and the union immense publicity as they were depicted by the newspapers as the main force in the dispute, leaving the ALP Disputes Committee in the background. Perhaps this provided a background to the eventual antagonism with which Shelley was treated by the ALP. The HCCTRIUW took full responsibility for maintaining the strikers as solidarity outside the union dwindled. Eventually the union negotiated a peaceful settlement, facilitated by the diminution of confrontation under new owners. This was, however, Shelley's least successful exercise in industrial relations as, until the increased stringencies of the Depression imposed more difficulties on workers, she usually succeeded in gaining most demands.

In contrast, the hotel and tearooms employees strike in 1925 was one of her most important successes in the industrial wing of the movement. However, it may also have contributed to her problems in the Party, leading as it did to the accusation that she and another organiser, George Ryce, were communists. The year, 1925, was important in her relationship with the ALP, the industrial action no sooner finishing in June than the ALP July Conference debated the Ryce expulsion and Shelley's outspoken criticism of the ALP. She did not accept the Dispute Committee's decision on preference to unionists and the union became involved in further industrial action. [44]

Shelley was gratified by the prominence she claims the dispute was given by the newspapers. [45] She was conspicuous in demonstrations, winning the title of "the strikers' champion" and was accused by her detractors of being like Madame Defarge. Her spirited reply, 'don't know about your head but we're going to cut off your business...that will be sufficient' [46] was a successful threat as all non-union labour was withdrawn.

Shelley's speech at the May Day March and demonstration shows that she had achieved some status in the movement as most speakers were parliamentarians or unionists at the

highest levels of the labour movement. In the speech she referred to the union's activities and explained their demands. She said:

> The union which I represent is at present engaged in an industrial conflict with the employers. We are not out for job control, as has been stated...not that we would be averse to job control...but we are out simply to provide that restaurant and tearoom employees shall be allowed to belong to their union... [47]

By 5 May Shelley had won her case in all but one Fremantle establishment. However, the initial success diminished by the end of May. All workers had won important increases in wages and although the Perth based firms had refused to co-operate on preference to unionists, the partial success in Fremantle led to those employees returning to work. Secret negotiations took place between the union, the employees' representatives and the Disputes Committee. On 2 June it was reported that the matter was settled due to McCallum's intervention. Lack of agreement on preference for unionists remained a sore point with Shelley for years. [48]

Her former admiration for McCallum diminished from this period and by the July Conference she was scathing about him, claiming that he had reneged on election promises. [49] Ryce supported her, claiming that the negotiations were detrimental to workers.

The result also caused uproar amongst unionists who called a special meeting. However, by 3 June a return to work was agreed on conditions which, although unsatisfactory on one issue, were an improvement on earlier concessions. An agreement for three years was signed with wage increases to 15/- a week for cooks and protection of strikers against dismissal. Preference was to be given to unionists if all other matters were equal. Wage differentials between women and men became based on hours worked rather than entirely on

gender.

The dispute had two long term consequences. On May 10 a *Sunday Times* report on the strike claimed that Shelley and Ryce were under communist influence. [50] This public accusation was followed up at the July ALP Conference where Tom Walshe's part in the Seaman's Union strike was perceived as a major communist influence, readily accepted and supported by Ryce. Although only Ryce was on trial for his part in the strike, Shelley was included in the accusations because of her role in supporting him. [51] She was also criticised for using his services during the catering dispute and denouncing the ALP on its treatment of Ryce as well as pre-selection procedures. [52]

A more positive outcome of the dispute was an item included on the Congress agenda by the HCCTRIUW. The proposal was aimed at strengthening unions and took the form of an amendment to the Arbitration Act to provide for the cancellation of the licence of any holder guilty of breaches of industrial agreements or awards. The Industrial Committee was successful in having the item rejected on the basis that more effective penalties would overcome the possibility of the amendment being used against unions. [53] This resolution exemplifies Shelley's determination to use all avenues, negotiation, militancy and legislative, to achieve better conditions for workers.

Another area in which Shelley achieved prominence was in recruiting members. Her success was resented by the Secretary of the Barmaid's and Barmen's Union who attempted to take over HCCTRIUW members employed in hotels. As the move began soon after the Esplanade Hotel strike it is possible that the strikers' tenacity improved their appeal to union organisers as contributors to industrial strength as well as to numbers and funds. Shelley opposed the moves, suspicious that the tearooms and catering staff in other establishments would be neglected. She was justified as her politically astute offer to transfer the whole membership was rejected and the union remained intact. [54]

As equal pay had been won for bartenders it is perhaps surprising that members of the HCCTRIUW did not support the change. However, it is possible that they believed it unlikely that equal pay would necessarily extend to all workers covered by the union, particularly if they were in occupations predominantly filled by women. Shelley believed that Judge Burnside [55] had decided in favour of the union on the matter only to displace women workers as he was opposed to women working in hotels in a bar tending capacity. [56] Another demarcation dispute arose in 1928 and although it was settled to the satisfaction of the HCCTRIUW Shelley was involved in a fairly hard fought battle in the Arbitration Court. The Metropolitan Cleaners, Caretakers and Lift Attendants Industrial Union of Workers was first organised in 1920 and initially attempted to cover some employees in shops. This was not pursued. However, in 1928 an attempt was made to increase the membership by seeking to cover domestic workers. [57] An amendment to exclude those domestic staff employed in hotels, clubs, boarding houses and catering establishments was defeated.

A further amendment, that domestic workers should mean all workers, male and female, employed as cooks, waitresses, housemaids, kitchen maids, laundresses, charwomen, yardmen and gardeners in government or private secondary schools, boarding houses, guest houses and private hospitals resulted in objections from the Hospital Employees Union and the Hospital and Asylum Employees Union in Kalgoorlie. [58]

By July 1930 an objection in writing from Shelley to the Cleaners and Caretakers Union indicated that she intended to fight in the Court. She suggested that the HCCTRIUW already covered some of the establishments that the Cleaners' Union sought to cover and that their use of the term "boarding house" to denote one area of their proposed activity was obscure and could lead to friction between the unions in organising members. [59] Shelley appeared before the Court on 13 October 1930 to conduct the HCCTRIUW case. She accumulated evidence such as a study of the Cleaners and

Caretakers constitution to a mass of detailed information on the Shops and Factory Act, the type of work undertaken by the members and the awards won by the union. She declared that the Court was quibbling over the definition of a boarding house, claiming that:

> The shop and Factory Act defines a boarding house as a place where a meal can be obtained. The Arbitration Court has not given us the definition of a boarding house...there will be constant fighting as to which union can cover certain establishments. Some of the guest houses are merely boarding houses by another name. [60]

She went on to say that there was no similarity between the work done by the workers covered by the Cleaners and Caretakers Union and those its Secretary sought to include as members. She criticised the opposition, saying:

> The Cleaners and Caretakers Union are a distinct menace to the Hotel, Club, Caterers Union. They ask for a lower standard of wages than we are prepared to accept. I quote from Mr Brown's answer to Mr Barker in a recent application for award...they were prepared to accept the terms of the Wooroloo Sanatorium award...If Mr Brown would confine his efforts to the Cleaners and Caretakers it would be all right. Mr Brown has done a great deal for (them)...the application for the change of name was an application to wipe out our union...' [61]

A further argument, that domestic workers were people employed in private homes rather than all women employed in clubs or the similar establishments, proved once again to exclude such workers from a union and the Arbitration Court. The decision handed down on 30 October disallowed the

inclusion of boarding houses, guest houses and private homes from the Cleaners and Caretakers provenance. Domestic workers who had been included in the 1920 Cleaners and Caretakers award and were not covered by the HCCTRIUW were now without any redress, in form or in fact. [62] Thus Shelley's success in addressing the problems of her union and the way in which these were resolved by the Court's wide interpretation of "domestic" served to disadvantage a large group of female workers.

Shelley's understanding of their problems through her own experience did not influence her handling of the case, nor does it seem that women's organisations, non-party or ALP were aware that a decision had been made in an area of discrimination with which they had previously been concerned.

One explanation for the lack of attention given the decision may have been the relationship between Shelley and the WA Organisation of Labor Women. Shelley was an active member of the organisation from the early 1920s when she was invited by their committee to help in giving the organisation a new impetus. There had been a lull in their activities, as an aftermath of the conscription crisis and Shelley came to the attention of the women as a stimulating person with the capacity to inspire others to participate in Labor affairs. [63] The relationship deteriorated during Shelley's involvement with the British Seaman's Union strike.

ALP Role

Shelley nominated for Senate pre-selection in 1925 in a ballot of thirty two people. Although her circular, outlining her objectives and credentials for the position, shows her tendency to exaggerate, it also demonstrates her capacity to make an argument based on previous accomplishments and promises for the future. She wrote:

Dear Comrade,

As the result of requests received from many parts of Western Australia, I am contesting the Senate Selection Ballot.

Intelligent judgement is based on facts --- therefore I submit to you the following results of my work: Within the five years of my Secretaryship of the Hotel and Restaurants' Union the membership has increased 120%. The industrial conditions have been altered from the worst the best in Australasia. The working girl or woman received 100% less wages than she receives today. A yardman was then receiving one pound per week; now he is getting as much per week as a miner. Industrial agreements covering the catering industry are extending from one end of the State to the other. In turn I have been Trustee and Executive Officer of the Metropolitan Council, Secretary of the W.A. Organisation of Labor Women, Secretary and Organiser of the Hotel, Restaurant and Tearoom Employees' Union, Delegate to several Labor Conferences, and at present I represent the Eastern Goldfields' District Council on the State Executive of the A.L.P.

For many years, whilst actively engaged in industrial work, I have been, and still am, studying the theoretical and political side of the movement. Therefore I believe I may be trusted to give intelligent expression to the aims and aspirations of working men and women.

If given the opportunity, I will make an earnest endeavour to have the existing tariff reviewed; to amend the Federal Arbitration Act so that it may function in the interests of the wage earners; and I will try persistently to keep the purchasing power of the workers in step with the increase of production. It may be a shock to you to know that the standard of living in Australia is 33% lower

to-day than it was fifty years ago.
Politics, to me, mean proper control of social and economic affairs for the National Household; and it is necessary for a woman of our own class to exhaust all the possibilities of politics to deal with unemployment, housing, education, the care of women and children, and many other problems of our daily lives.
Should I be one of the three selected, I will give my best in every opportunity to advance the interest of the working people.
REMEMBER! You must vote for at least three candidates. [64]

Shelley's bid was unsuccessful and together with the difficulties she was experiencing in her efforts industrially, led her into a period of self destruction in the ALP. She refused to work for the pre-selected ALP candidates and became increasingly critical of the Party hierarchy.

Although she had been a successful Secretary of the women's organisation moves were begun at this time to expel her. Her radicalism was at the root of the problem as it was suggested that she "went too far". Politician's wives became involved in a struggle in the organisation as a game of numbers was carried out, sometimes Shelley preserving her position by stacking the meeting with her supporters, at other times more conservative women gaining the upper hand. [65]

The matter ended when the proposal to change the name of the organisation was put into effect at the 1925 Conference. The controversy at the Conference was without doubt a method of limiting Shelley's base in the Party and served also to make the WA Organisation of Labor Women more responsible to the Party through its incorporation in the ALP constitution under the name of Perth Labor Women's Branch. [66] Shelley said that she, 'Never bothered with

the Labor Women's Organisation after that', [67] and became more involved in union matters. Both Shelley and Mrs Green, one of the leaders of the group who opposed her, stood for pre-selection in the Senate ballot held about the same time as the controversy. Although it is quite likely that each had her own reasons for standing it is also possible that Green was encouraged to oppose Shelley so as to ensure her failure. [68]

Debate at the 1925 Conference indicated that the issue had become irrevocably involved with fear of radical activism and the suggestion that communism influence was being exerted in the Party. Shelley's public anger over several issues, including the pre-selection ballot for the Senate and the strike, aligned her with radical dissenters. The stance of the Disputes Committee, Minister for Police and the majority of delegates at the Conference was more conservative. Moves against her therefore are more appropriately explained in terms of intra-party "factionalism" than opposition to a woman gaining status and power. A generous defence of Shelley was offered at the Congress by Mr J.A. Watts, who stated that:

> While he did not agree with Miss Shelley's methods, she was a wonderful woman. He knew her spirit, and if the motion [that unions critical of candidates in the next Federal election should be forced to withdraw or be declared outside the labour movement] were adopted she and her union would become more antagonistic. If she was given time she would come back. [69]

Conference rejected the motion and an amendment which would have given the State Executive authority to act on the matter.

By the time she left the ALP, her disappointment with the 1925 proceedings occurring simultaneously with her expulsion, Shelley had been a trustee and executive officer of the Metropolitan Council, the Secretary of the WA

Organisation of Labor Women, delegate to several Labor Congresses and had represented the Eastern Goldfields District Council on the State Executive. She had worked on the Disputes Committee and had been nominated as a candidate from the Metropolitan Council for the National Executive. In the industrial field she had been the Secretary and organiser of the HCCTRIUW for five years in which she achieved major improvements in its membership, members' wages and their conditions. She had been successful in having metropolitan industrial agreements extended throughout the state and had also found time to study theoretical aspects of the movement. She had declared her belief that, '...it [was] necessary for women of our own class to exhaust all the possibilities of politics to deal with unemployment, housing, education, the care of women and children...' [70] and had helped rejuvenate the Labor women's activities.

Shelley's expulsion did not affect her prestige in the union and probably strengthened her relationship with Ryce and other unionists. Her contribution to the Congress debate on Ryce's expulsion was criticised by Mr A. Clementson who, in representing the Geraldton District Council, said that he had, '...never heard Labor men traduced as Miss Shelley had traduced them. According to her everyone she criticised was corrupt and rotten...' [71]

Shelley's problems arose from more than her role in the political wing or demarcation disputes. Her influence in branches of the union, in particular the Goldfields Branch of the HCCTRIUW was also important. One of her supporters, Helen McIntyre was elected as Secretary in 1921, replacing the male Secretary who had become President. [72] This increased Shelley's de facto influence at the same time as giving women increased significance on the executive.

By September Shelley had became Secretary, a position she held for about a year. However, by 1929 attempts were made to wrest the Goldfields Branch from her and her supporters so as to return it to the control of the ALP

hierarchy. In this time the union's address was changed from the Trades Hall to Hannan Street and back again - an indication that there was a fight between two groups in the union. The controversy did not cease with Shelley's departure from the executive and subsequent less prominent role. F. Michell, who became Secretary in August 1930, remained in the position until at least the late 1930s and in that time became the focus of further antagonism from the ALP. [73]

While the Goldfields Branch was under her control Shelley worked hard for her members. Her concern for them went beyond industrial issues and on one occasion during her prosecution for having libelled another Secretary in a demarcation dispute she burst into tears in the witness stand. Everyone was surprised as she was seen as a courageous person who could stand up to criticism and even the 30 pound fine she received. Her tears were not for herself, despite the enormity of the fine to a person in her financial position.

The explanation for Shelley's distress lay in the problems experienced by one of her Kalgoorlie members. She was the wife of one of the men charged with having murdered a Kalgoorlie police officer and Shelley had been giving her personal support and encouragement over a difficult and lengthy period. In comparison with the terrible situation of her union member, Shelley thought her own problems were very small. [74] Her compassion in this case is only one example of her strong feelings for her members and it is likely that it is this characteristic which contributed to Shelley's tremendous popularity in the HCCTRIUW over such a long period of time.

In the 1930s this compassion was directed into her work for unemployed women and girls. It was in this period that the Labor women and Shelley renewed their efforts to work together on women's behalf. [75] However, although the relationship did not break down in any dramatic way, she and the Labor women found that their interests had diverged.

Shelley concentrated on the union and the Labor women, with one of their members having won a seat in Parliament, worked for women though the parliamentary wing of the labour movement.

Shelley appears to have cut through most of the antagonism attendant on a woman taking on a non-traditional role in the labour movement. Unlike Beadle, she retained her radical image throughout her long term of office and remained to those who knew her, a fiery supporter of workers' rights. This was an image which she also projected, claiming that at no time did she think of herself as a woman but always as a union organiser working for unionists of whom a majority were women.

Cecilia Shelley died in 1983, having seen a Labor Government elected both in 1972 and the year she died. Although she had never rejoined the ALP, her commitment to the broader movement which she saw as working on behalf of her class and gender remained. [76]

NOTES

1. Joyce, *op. cit.* 1984 (b).
2. Carter, *op. cit.*
3. Shelley, Interview with Robin Joyce, June 1980.
4. ibid.
5. Shelley, Oral History Program, Battye Library, 13/9/76.
6. Joyce, *op. cit.* 1984 (b)
7. Shelley, op. cit. June 1980.
8. Carter, *op. cit.*
9. Shelley, op.cit. June 1980.
10. *ibid.*
11. Carter, *op. cit.* p92.
12. Shelley op. cit. 13/9/76.
13. ibid.
14. Carter, *op. cit.* P94.
15. Shelley op. cit. 13/9/76.
16. Shelley op. cit. 13/9/76, Kennedy, Sally typescript and Townsend, Rosa Interview with Robin Joyce, 1983.
17. Joyce, Interview June 1980.
18. ibid.
19. ibid.
20. Shelley, June 1980.
21. Carter *op. cit.* Pp94 - 95.
22. *ibid.*
23. Shelley, op. cit. 13/9/76.
24. Shelley, op. cit. June 1980.
25. ibid.
26. ibid.
27. Carter *op. cit.* Pp96 - 98.

28. Shelley, op. cit., June 1980.

29. ibid.

30. Shelley, op. cit. 13/9/76.

31. Shelley, op. cit., June 1980.

32. ibid.

33. ibid.

34. Shelley, op. cit. June 1980.

35. Shelley, op. cit. 13/9/76.

36. ibid.

37. ibid.

38. Townsend, op. cit.

39. Shelley, op. cit. June 1980.

40. ibid.

41. ibid.

42. Shelley, op. cit. June 1980.

43. ibid.

44. The *West Australian* 14/3/25 and The *Sunday Times* 29/3/25.

45. Shelley, op. cit. June 1980.

46. The *West Australian* 8/5/25.

47. Metropolitan Cleaners, Caretakers and Lift Attendants Industrial Union of Workers, File 490/1930.

48. Shelley, op. cit. June 1980.

49. ibid.

50. The *Sunday Times*, 10 May 19

51. Although it has been suggested that Cecilia Shelley and George Ryce were lovers there is no evidence for this speculation. In her discussions with me she was quite open about her marriage to Boniface, but at no time mentioned Ryce as anything other than a co-worker on behalf of HCCTRIUW members.

52. ALP WA Branch, *Official Report of Proceedings, Twelfth Labor Congress*, Tuesday July 7 1925, and following days.

53. *ibid.*

54. Shelley, op. cit. June 1980.

55. Although Shelley referred to him as Judge Burnside in my interview with her in June 1980, in reality it was Justice Parker who adopted this device.

56. Shelley, op.cit. June 1980.

57. Metropolitan Cleaners, caretakers and Lift Attendants Industrial Union of Workers, op. cit.

58. ibid.

59. ibid. Record of Hearing.

60. ibid.

61. ibid.

62. Metropolitan Cleaners, Caretakers and Lift Attendants Industrial Union of Workers, 30/10/30.

63. Shelley, op. cit. June 1980. Other groups such as the Cleaners and Caretakers asked for her assistance in organising and the Butchers Union followed her lead on some matters of organisation and establishing the basis of an award. Shelley's own recall of her influence is supported by people who knew her in 1940s. For example, James McMullan and Rosa Townsend in separate interviews with me referred to Shelley's strength of character and ability to enthuse other unionists. The observations of Colin Phul who conducted the interview with Shelley undertaken in the Oral History Program and those of Sally Kennedy and Jan Carter suggest that Shelley had a winning personality.

64. Shelley, *Federal Elections Senate Selection Ballot Circular*, Westralian Worker Printers, 1924.

65. Shelley, op. cit. 13/9/76.

66. ibid.

67. ibid.

68. Shelley suggested in her June 1980 interview that years afterwards Mrs Green apologised to Shelley, saying '...we were just used against you, you know...'.

69. ALP WA Labor Congress *op. cit.*

70. Shelley, op. cit. June 1980.

71. ALP WA Branch, Labor Congress *op. cit.*

72. Shelley, op. cit. June 1980.

73. Hotel, Club, Caterers Union of Employees Goldfields Branch File No. 685/1930.

74. Shelley op. cit. June 1980.

75. Kennedy op. cit.

76. Shelley op. cit. June 1980.

CHAPTER 10
CONCLUSION

It has been suggested that 'until recently the "womenfolk" of the labour movement were always assigned a status derived from their position as wives and mothers of working men... [who] joined the combatants [in trade union campaigns] in an auxiliary role'. [1] However this is demonstrably untrue when the evidence accumulated from even the fragmentary material available from the activities of Western Australian women from the early 1900s to the 1930s Depression is examined.

Western Australian women used the resources of the labour movement and women's organisations as well as their personal strengths to improve women's working conditions. [2] They had varying levels of success in the four areas defined by Lukes as essential to examining the operation of power relationships: decision making and influence on establishing the political agenda; raising issues or potential issues; involvement in observable (overt or covert) and latent conflict; and dealing with problems arising from the complexities associated with conflicting subjective and real interests.

Women in the labour movement such as Beadle, Shelley, Hooten, Holman, the McEntyre sisters and numerous others, named and anonymous, are shown to have been far more than auxiliaries when their activities are examined against Lukes' framework. Through their activities in the labour movement, and their work with women such as Edith Cowan from the conservative side of party politics, they won improvements for women from the early 1900s.

That they were not always successful in gaining their demands does not support the view that women did nothing. Instead, this thesis establishes the significance of women's industrial activity on women's behalf, including their attempts to win equal pay (the most direct example of their failure) and to establish their legitimacy as workers (the

most important indirect failure). Despite these failures, it is demonstrated that women operated with some degree of success within the available forums, the labour movement and women's non-party organisations, to achieve industrial changes.

Lukes' three dimensional framework fosters an understanding of the way in which women worked together to achieve women's aims, sometimes at the expense of their party affiliations. It also provides a focus for examining those conflicts which arose within the labour movement between Labor women and men, and on occasion between Labor women which undermined the women's power. However, rather than give this feature of the period so much prominence that the thesis falls into the trap of appearing to suggest that "women were their own worst enemies" the labour movement and its reception of women's aims has been given thorough consideration. Importance too, has been given to developing an understanding of the political, social and economic environments in which the women worked.

Before considering women's power within the organisations in which they worked, it is also necessary to refer briefly to the associated complications. The evidence makes it clear that it is simplistic to view the labour movement as a male dominated organisation in which women's needs and contributions were ignored or immersed in men's needs and contributions. At the same time it must be recognised that relationships in the women's organisations, which superficially appeared to be dominated by women from the Western Australian middle classes, were also intricate. For example, ALP women were important contributors to their ideology and activity on behalf of Western Australian women from all classes.

In both areas of political activism Labor women were an essential part of the decision making, particularly, but not exclusively, in relation to women's concerns, and exerted varying levels of control over the organisations' agendas. This led in turn to their influencing, at least indirectly,

and at times more openly, the Western Australian social, political and economic agendas in the period.

Obvious power bases were available to women through the organisations in which they worked: the ALP, unions and women's organisations. Conflict occurred over who should win such positions of power, a normal activity in any organisational hierarchy. However, women became members of union executives, from the strong and charismatic Cecilia Shelley to the lesser known women who became trustees or committee members. As well as taking such prominent roles in unions, some women became members of the influential State Executive of the ALP and the Party's various committees such as the ALP Disputes Committee which was dedicated to industrial disputes. In addition, women were active on ALP Councils and within branches, as well as working in special positions such as that of the WO.

In non-party women's organisations and forums of the ALP exclusive to women they naturally assumed positions of power. The significance of this in the non-party organisations was the role that ALP women adopted in what appeared to be middle class women's power bases. Together with their exclusive power bases in the ALP, Labor women became accustomed to taking and dealing with power. This they used in their public demands upon both Labor and Nationalist governments, such as the fight for KEMH and various deputations aimed at improving industrial conditions for women.

Turning to the second level of influence, issues and potential issues were easily raised by women during the period. In addition, that the labour movement was open to discussion of matters specifically related to women workers is illustrated by the easy acceptance of women in the process. In particular, the commitment of the Metropolitan, Fremantle and Midland Councils and a wide range of unions to the establishment and operation of the WO position demonstrates support for a specialist position aimed at improving women's industrial position and working

conditions. Difficult financial circumstances shortened the term of the WO. However, the establishment of a paid position exclusively for the promotion of women's union activities was an important dimension of women's activities. In addition, the position was maintained until Beadle, not only the incumbent but an astute political activist, suggested its abolition.

Industrial issues which were taken up by the WO were sometimes quite comfortable areas of action for the labour movement, associated as they were with women employed in predominantly or exclusively female occupations. However, women's concern with turning the philosophical commitment to equal pay into reality and the ultimate questioning of the labour movement's commitment to the family wage was not easy to resolve. Despite the difficulties, the issue remained on the agenda, women and men working together in a genuine attempt (as opposed to the disingenuous support aimed at removing women from some occupations) to achieve equal pay. At times the commitment *was* pursued to maintain particular occupations for men. However, the dissension in ALP Branches over Somerville's refusal to adopt the principle as Industrial Advocate supports the contention that the labour movement was not immune to women's demands - and that women did not hesitate to use this forum despite the likelihood of (and in practice) controversy.

A wide range of women's industrial objectives, from specific grievances to general advocacy for improved conditions and pay were pursued in the Arbitration Court by Advocates from the labour movement. As few women adopted the role of Advocate, due to Court practice and the treatment of women by Court personnel, males became significant contributors to women workers' fights for industrial rights through the Court. Although male Advocates' abilities and sympathy with women's wider aims varied, women who were thus represented often attributed successes to their representation.

Commitment from the wider labour movement was also

important to women's continued involvement in disputes and proposed or actual industrial action. At times the Disputes Committee did not focus as fully on issues of concern as women such as Shelley demanded, leading to frustration and legitimate antagonism toward the labour hierarchy. On the other hand, ALP reaction to women's disputes and commitment to their strike action suggests that support for women unionists was a natural, rather than special part of the labour agenda.

Lukes' model includes consideration of the power an individual or group exerts in becoming a party to, or instigator of, observable (overt or covert) and latent conflict. Recognition of this power, taking into consideration as it does grassroots activists and less obvious power, is particularly important in the context of this investigation of women's work and industrial issues.

Women who remain anonymous were often complainants on industrial matters. Their anonymity suggests that they had little public power and were dependent on personal strengths to draw attention to their concerns. Giving recognition to this individual manifestation of activism is important in assessing women's own belief in their power: without such assurance the complaints would not ever have been made.

Lukes' reflection on grievances as '...an undirected complaint arising out of everyday experience, a vague feeling of unease or sense of deprivation' [3] is particularly important in this context. In the more radical examples women attended stop work meetings to discuss their concerns; in other cases their protests were limited to letters to employees' representatives such as the WO or union organisers. At other times a more public protest was exhibited through the press. Colourful examples of un-named women's protests were the "Juliets in caps" factory workers' dispute and the "Shelley's Army" women who danced on cafe table tops.

Protesters, even when they were not part of the organised labour movement, clearly had expectations of

justice. Although women with more obvious power, such as Beadle and Shelley, were necessary to bring these demands to fruition their power would have been virtually non-existent if they had not been alerted to women's concerns. As a result, individuals' concerns were often a catalyst to disputes, arbitration and, at times more military action such as strikes.

Before returning to the third dimension of Lukes' model [4] it is important to note that the criteria he establishes for participation were more than adequately fulfilled by women in the period. Women were active at each of Lukes' five levels of participation - through their union membership; election to union executives; recognition as activists and promotion to union executives; participation in strikes or as witnesses in Arbitration Court hearings, thereby questioning employers' authority and passive stereotyping of women's abilities in a male dominated arena; and channelling women's discontent or latent grievances into positive action through leadership.

Turning to the third dimension of Lukes' framework, women's coming together from different classes and interest groups to work in non-party organisations on behalf of women clearly influenced the power they were able to wield in the WA labour movement. However, Labor women were also distracted through their perception that their interests converged with those of the dominant male interests in the movement. In particular, ALP women's power was diminished through these perceptions when associated with concerns about equal pay and women's legitimacy in the workforce. Each of these hinged on women's and men's perception of the breadwinner who, despite the evidence, was most often seen as a male with dependents. Labor women of the early 1900s, dedicated as they were to achieving socialism, or at least better conditions for the working class in general, were ideal candidates for the dilemma which is focussed upon by this part of Lukes' model.

The fight for equal pay was strongly pursued throughout

the period. However, other issues, such as the unionisation of women, improvements in working conditions and opening up a wider range of work opportunities were also important. Together with these aims was a desire to maintain choices for women that, while including opportunities in paid work, gave them the right to be part of a family in which the major breadwinner earned enough to maintain a wife and children.

Another dimension of these joint concerns and, in this case with a positive outcome, were Labor women's two-pronged attacks on women's menial position. Demands that women in their traditional maternal role should have improved access to professional care were instrumental in nurses gaining professional recognition through registration.

In comparison with this success was women's lack of a clear focus on women as individual earners. Real change for women workers relied on them being given legitimacy as breadwinners. Farsighted though they were, women's aims were undermined by complexities associated with gender. Traditional expectations of women's family role clouded the thinking of even the most radical proponent of change. Although census figures show that large numbers of women were responsible for maintaining a household independently of a male breadwinner, the mythology centring on social gender expectations cemented in place an ideology which in turn created an economic environment which obscured reality.

Protective industrial legislation also highlighted the complications associated with gender. At the same time as the labour movement recognised that occupational health and safety conditions were abysmal, special legislation discriminated against women's right to fulfil a broad range of occupations. On the other hand, improvements in women's and children's working conditions quite feasibly might have been expected to lead to general improvements over time. Women, and men, in the labour movement had conflicting aspirations in this matter, as with so many others.

At the same time as gender relations undermined women's

ability to always focus on their real interests in the labour movement, class and personality affected liaisons in the non-Party organisations. At times, conflicts arising from different interpretations of the action and principles which would benefit women destroyed the "sisterhood" which usually existed between women in the labour movement and across party lines.

Complexity is again the key word in conflicts between strong individualistic women in the ALP, women's organisations and in the two teachers' unions briefly considered in this thesis. Often personalities reflected ideological differences, for instance in relation to the Conscription issue; feminist positions; and responses to educational philosophies. None was simple, and to suggest that arguments were merely those of "hysterical women" (as suggested by a female protagonist during the teachers' union controversy discussed in Appendix 5) fails to consider all the conflicting elements.

Women in teachers' unions, although not affiliated to the TLC, were also concerned to make industrial gains. As a profession to which the children of blue collar union workers aspired, it might be expected that a concern with fair wages and conditions would be moderated as part of a perceived move to the middle class. However, women in this union also took industrial action over grievances, and like blue collar women workers were diverted by traditional attitudes to gender, and personal conflict. South Australian and Western Australian female teachers were activists in the professional field, which because of its nurturing qualities, was strongly linked with the mythology which dogged women's work.

Closely associated with these concerns were conflicts between women in the essentially middle class women's organisations which worked to diminish the effects of traditional attitudes to gender. Whether non-party, such as the NCW or WSG, Labor women's organisations or unions associated with the ALP, such as the HCCTRIUW, or the non-

affiliated unions such as the SSTUWA, personal and professional conflicts undermined women's power to achieve their aims.

Nonetheless, understanding and accepting that complexities existed does not limit their impact. Labor women were not immune to personality clashes and ideological splits, despite their general commitment to ALP politics. Shelley's alienation from ALP women deprived them of a feisty advocate for their interests. In addition, Labor women's acceptance of male advice on dealing with Shelley at least temporarily weakened their stance on women's commitment to other women.

There was also a positive side to such conflict. An ability to debate and investigate a variety of policy alternatives, often leading to strongly held but opposing views, was symptomatic of the women's activities both in the labour movement and the women's organisations. The power and influence of two strong, but quite different, women as exemplified by Beadle and Shelley, suggest that diversity was an important part of the organisations' development of women's policy in the period.

Returning to the third dimension of Lukes' model, perceptions that limit the power of a group's real interests as opposed to concerns for "the greater good" are not exclusive to women. Class and gender interests combined with intent to pursue justice were a complex mix for other groups.

Alice Henry's assertion in 1906 [5] that middle class women were prepared to undermine the status quo is relevant in this context. During this period middle class women, unlike many of their working class "sisters" *were* dependent on male financial support. Middle class women's attempts to undermine, or at least question, the dominant ideology, increased Labor women's power, by demanding a '...larger justice, the equality of opportunity...'[6] Such women were either remarkably alert to their long term interests or prepared to undermine their own position on behalf of a

different class.

Middle class women were not alone in looking beyond their immediate interests. ALP women considered broader gender and justice concerns which, in the short term limited the positions available to women, when a Labor Women's Conference motion in favour of women only magistrates on the Children's Court was rejected. Rather than merely concentrating on women forging an inroad into "men's territory" they supported equal treatment of men and women.

Women's commitment to the ALP during the period covered by this thesis, and the subsequent deflection of some of their energies, could be painted as a female characteristic. However, it is worth considering briefly the behaviour of the labour movement during the 1980s and 1990s. It is possible that, on reflection, unionised labour during the period of the Accord struck with the Federal Labor Governments under the leadership of Bob Hawke and Paul Keating, [7] might be seen to have fallen into the same trap which deflected women from their industrial aims over seventy years before.

It is clear that a group's inability to appraise subjective and real interests where these conflict because a less powerful group subsumes its interests "for the greater good", [8] which was in operation at times during the early 1900s as women sought to win improved wages and conditions in a movement dedicated to the family wage, was not exclusive to this period or to women.

In addition, women in the labour movement were most adept at using the forums available to them to advance their cause, resulting in their achieving many of their aims. Their high profile in the movement was a consequence not only of their pursuit of women's industrial and social aims but of their acceptance as important contributors to the labour movement. This acceptance enhanced their ability to work equally with men in its various forums. Although sometimes women's perceptions were distorted because of their commitment to a movement which was influenced by

traditional assumptions about gender, they also at times used their strength to challenge policies which undermined women's aims.

Such ideological debate assisted women to develop their aspirations on women's behalf. In addition, what appeared to be insurmountable divisions were often short lived. Women came together again under the auspices of different organisations or on behalf of other challenges.

One challenge was the deepening of the 1930s Depression when improvements in industrial conditions and women's developing legitimacy in the paid workforce came to an end. ALP women working for the unemployed joined forces with those in non-party organisations, as they had on behalf of women in the past. Most importantly they resurrected their relationship with Shelley, hostilities forgotten as the women worked together to provide assistance for women and children.

Despite the complexities, Labor women and their union counterparts took significant steps on behalf of women's industrial interests. The women's organisations' espousal of progressive theories on women's position in society contributed to a milieu in which the subject of equality was on the broader political agenda.

Labor women were often able to see beyond mythology and fight for their interests, at other times their commitment to the labour movement and its aims limited their vision. However, this did not diminish their activism on behalf of women workers, rather the difficulties they had to overcome suggest that the women who are the subject of this thesis were an important part of the political, social and economic environment in Western Australian from the 1900s to the 1930 Depression. In this time they established a firm foundation for the changes in women's role in the workforce which have taken place during the 1980s and 1990s.

1. Mitchell, Winifred "Wives of the Radical Labour Movement" in Curthoys, A., Eade, S. and Spearitt, P. *Women at Work*, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Canberra, 1975.

2. In a letter to me dated 27/8/1976 Irene Greenwood suggested that the women's movement in WA was different from that in NSW and Victoria, and that Professor Manning Clarke had supported this view.

3. Lukes *op. cit.*

4. *ibid.*

5. Henry *op.cit.*

6. *ibid.*

7. Powerful unions which could have used industrial muscle to achieve their aims accepted a diminished industrial role, and therefore economic and industrial advantages, under the Accord. Although they were powerful in comparison with other unions, who were able to achieve improvements under the Accord because industrial strength was not the only requirement for doing so, the relationship between unions and the owners of capital is unequal.

8. Lukes *op. cit.* In addition to the examples that are directly relevant to this thesis, the current debate on the proposed Goods and Services Tax includes the admonition that Australians should consider the "greater good" rather than concentrate on personal disadvantages that could be suffered by some groups and individuals under the proposed Goods and Services Tax.

APPENDIX 1 TABLES: WOMEN'S WORK AND WAGES

1923 SALESPEOPLE'S WAGES - WA METROPOLITAN AREA

MALES	FEMALES - per week
15/-	15/-
20/-	17/6
25/-	22/6
35/-	27/6
45/-	35/-
55/-	42/-
70/-	50/-
85/- 7th year or 23 years of age	55/-

The Western Australian Industrial Gazette, 17/1923.

1923 FEMININITY IN THE CLOTHING INDUSTRY

INDUSTRY	MALES	FEMALES	FEMININITY*
Tailoring & slop clothing	1,577	5,137	326
Waterproof & oilskin clothing	72	186	258
Dressmaking	501	6,783	1,354
Millinery	106	1,582	1,492
Shirts, collars & underclothing	428	4,338	1,014
Stays & corsets	89	682	766
Handkerchiefs, ties & scarves	62	426	687
Hats & caps	670	752	108
Gloves	30	100	333
Boots & shoes	4,768	4,258	89
Boot repairing (including bespoke work)	552	9	2
Boot accessories	414	153	37
Umbrellas & walking sticks	29	74	255
Dyeworks & cleaning (including renovating and repairing)	290	236	81
Other	51	293	575

* Number of females per hundred males.
The Western Australian Industrial Gazette, 17/1923.

1925 WOMEN'S WORK AND WAGES

Class of work	Wages	No. applied for	No. engaged
Laundress Charwoman	Minimum 8s per day	1471	1426
Generals	Union wages	4	1
	35s - 40s + keep per week	14	5
	30s - 35s + keep per week	44	14
	25s - 30s + keep per week	139	41
	20s - 25s + keep per week	237	48
	15s - 20s + keep per week	40	4
	8s per day	25	19
Cooks	Union wages	62	24
	60s + keep per week	3	2
	50s - 60s + keep per week	6	2
	30s - 45s 6d + keep per week	91	24
	20s - 30s + keep per week	8	1
	8s - 10s per day	7	7
Kitchenmaids	Union wages	25	15
	40s + keep per week	1	1
	30s - 35s + keep per week	10	6
	25s - 30s	22	7
	15s - 25s	9	3

	8s per day	17	15
Resident Laundresses	Union wages	19	10
	60s + keep per week	1	1
	40s + keep per week	5	2
	35s + keep per week	13	8
	96 pounds p.a. + keep	2	1
	90 pounds p.a. + keep	1	1
	25s - 35s + keep per week	18	6
Housemaids	Union wages	10	4
	35s + keep per week	1	1
	25s - 35s + keep per week	32	12
	20s - 25s + keep per week	20	5
	8s per day	7	6
Cook-Generals	Union wages	2	-
	30s - 45s + keep per day	47	19
	25s - 30s + keep per day	31	6
	20s - 25s	15	1
Housekeepers	40s + keep per week	7	3
Useful Helps	Union wages	1	-
	20s - 25s + keep per week	6	3
	12s 6d - 20s + keep per week	73	12
	Under 12s 6d	13	2

Housemaids-Waitresses	Union wages	14	2
	35s + keep per weeks	4	1
	25s - 35s + keep per week	39	8
	22s 6d + keep per week	1	-
Office Cleaners	Union wages	12	10
Waitresses	Union wages	14	1
	35s + keep per week	3	1
	30s + keep per week	9	3
	25s + keep per week	1	1
Needlewoman	8s per day	7	7
Nurses	50s per week night shift	1	1
	35s - 40s + keep per week	1	-
	20s - 30s + keep per week	10	2
	Probationers' Award	5	3
	15s - 17s 6d + keep per week	4	1
Cook - Laundresses	2 pounds 5s 6d + keep per week	8	3
	35s - 45s 6d	6	2
	30s - 35s + keep per week	6	-
	25s + keep per week	3	1
Wardsmaids	33s + keep per week	1	1

	27s 6d + keep per week	5	3
	20s - 25s + keep per week	2	1
Housemaids-Laundresses	Union wages	1	1
	30s - 35s + keep per week	9	1
	20s - 30s + keep per week	5	2
Miscellaneous	Various wages	83	20
	TOTAL	2888	1863

Women's Employment Board Records, Battye Library.

1928 AWARD RATES FOR SAC COATS

	MALES	FEMALES
Standard starting price, by machine	35 shillings and one penny	21 shillings and twopence
When a worker does his or her own machining add to above price	1 shilling and eleven pence	1 shilling and fourpence

AWARD 1928 FOR THE CLOTHING TRADES

	RATE	MARGIN ABOVE BASIC WAGE
Male machinists or tailors engaged in machining any part of a garment	5 pounds and 7 shillings	18 shillings
Female coat machinists or tailoresses	3 pounds	10 shillings
Female trouser or vest machinists	2 pounds, 14 shillings and sixpence	5 shillings

Heagney, *op. cit.* p36.

WAGE DIFFERENTIALS IN "FEMALE" INDUSTRIES

TRADE	MALES - NUMBER	MALES - WAGE	FEMALES- NUMBER	FEMALES- WAGE	HOURS
AERATED WATER	367	61/11	15	39/9	48
BREWER.	694	96/5	--	--	48
BREAD	891	106/10	--	--	44
PASTRY.	738	--	--	--	48
BISCUITS	334	52/8	399	34/8	48
CONFECT.	734	75/1	1290	37/5	48
SUNDRIES	604	68/5	769	28/7	48
JAMS, PICKLES	600	65/9	506	34/11	48
BUTTER	1707	81/11	202	35/9	48
ICE CREAM	75	81/6	36	35/3	48
MEAT PRESERV.	111	78/1	28	23/1	48

"MALE" AND "FEMALE" TASKS BY WAGE

TRADE	MALES - NUMBER	AV. WAGE	FEMALES - NUMBER	AV. WAGE
Cardboard boxmaking	333	66/5	327	51/4
Printing	3699	89/11	1232	35/2
Stationery	115	71/9	169	34/8

Heagney, *op. cit.*

APPENDIX 2

WOMEN ON UNION EXECUTIVES *

1914	HCCTRIUW	Trustee	Miss Fanny Eccles
			Miss Margaret A. Newman
	SW Clothing Trades Union	Secretary	Bella B. England
1915	HCCTRIUW	Trustee	Miss Elsie Knight Mrs Margaret E. Tuckwell
1916	"	"	Miss Fanny Eccles
	"	"	Ellen M.Leo Mrs Mary Smith
1917	WAMFPU	President " Vice " Secretary Organiser	Miss H.G. Rann Mrs Alice Raison Miss Haysom Miss A. Barrott Mrs A. Casson
	HCCTRIUW	Trustee	Ellen M. Leo Mrs Mary Smith
	SW Clothing Trades Union	Vice Chairman Treasurer Vice Chairman	Miss May Mullens Annie Warren Miss A. Prosser
1918	"	Vice Chairman Treasurer Vice Chairman	Nelly Parker Annie Warren Miss May Mullens

	WAMFPU	President Vice President Secretary/ Treasurer Ass. Sec./ Treasurer Trustees	Miss A. Raison Miss Crabtree Mrs A. Casson Miss A. Barrett Miss F. Sill Miss V. Tressider
1919	"	President Vice Presidents Sec./ Treasurer Trustees	Miss H. Healy Miss Boddy Miss E. Sill Mrs A. Casson Miss V. Tressider Miss Farmer
	HCCTRIUW	Trustee	Miss Stella McLeod
	Tailor and Tailoresses (Eastern Goldfields)	"	Miss A. Reyan
1920	HCCTRIUW	Secretary Treasurers Trustees	Cecilia Shelley Miss Vera Lindley Miss Lena Shelley Miss Moira Higgins Miss Maggie Guille Miss Norah Shelley
	Hospital Employees	Secretary Trustees	John Pirani Ella Bohan Patricia Ford Stella Yeats

	WAMFPU	President Vice - Presidents Treasurer/ Secretary Trustees	Miss E. Fairlie Miss A. Raison Miss E. Murphy Miss A. Casson Miss E. Sill Miss V. Tressider
	SW Clothing Trades Union	Trustee	Clara Thompson
	Cleaners, Caretakers and Lift Attendants	Vice Chairman Treasurer Trustees	Miss Bessie Heenan Miss E. Mossop Miss Pansy J. Hawkes
	Tailor and Tailoresses Union (Eastern Goldfields)	Treasurer Trustees	Miss M. Reid Miss T. Lathean Miss A. Murray Miss A. Reynon
1921	HCCTRIUW	Secretary Trustee	Cecilia Shelley Melva Best
	Laundry Workers Union	Signatory to registration, which suggests an official position.	Elsie McMahon
	WAMFPU	Secretary/ Treasurer Board of Management President Vice President Trustees	Miss Vera Lindley Miss McCarroll Miss Lindley Miss H. Healy Miss Landridge Miss V. Tressider Miss McCarroll

	SW Clothing Trades Union	Trustee	Clara Thompson
	Cleaners and Caretakers Union	Secretary Trustees	Sylvia Donaldson Mrs Sherwood Mrs Jones
1922	HCCTRIUW	Secretary Trustee	Cecilia Shelley Melva Best
	Cleaners, Caretakers and Lift Attendants	Chairman Vice Chairman Secretary Trustees	Mrs Wearne Mrs Liddle Miss S. Donaldson Mrs Baker Mrs Spalding
	Hospital and Asylum Employees	Secretary	Ivy Pirani
	Tailor and Tailoresses (EG)	Trustees	Miss A. Murray Miss E. Jose Miss M. Joyce
1923	HCCTRIUW	Organiser Treasurer Trustee	Cecilia Shelley Moira Higgins Melva Best
	S.W. Clothing	Vice Chairman	Mrs L. Caine
	HCCTRIUW (EG)	Secretary	Miss Helen McEntyre
	Laundry Employees Union	Treasurer Trustees	Miss R. Mort Maggie Belvin Florence Parker
	Tailor and Tailoresses	Trustees	Miss M. Joyce Miss E. Hodgson
	Hospital and Asylum Employees	Secretary	Ivy Pirani

	Cleaners and Caretakers	Chairman Vice Chairman Trustees	Sarah Wearne May Jones Miss H.W. Brown Miss Biggin
1924	HCCTRIUW	Organiser Secretary/ Ass. Secretary	Cecilia Shelley "
	S.W. Clothing	Vice Chairman	Mrs Lily Caine
	Hospital and Asylum	Secretary	Ivy Pirani
	HCCTRIUW	Secretary	Helen McEntyre
	Cleaners and Caretakers	Treasurer Vice Chairman	Julia Edwards Sarah Wearne
	Tailor and Tailoresses	Trustee	M. Joyce
1925	HCCTRIUW	Organiser Treasurer	Cecilia Shelley Jessie Hannah
	S.W. Clothing	Vice Chairman	Lily Caine
	Hospital and Asylum	Secretary Trustee	Ivy Pirani Gwyn Davies
	HCCTRIUW (EG)	Secretary Treasurer Trustees	May Grace Rose Taafe Johanna Watson Marion Morris Ellen Jones
1926	HCCTRIUW	President Treasurer	Cecilia Shelley Violet Grimes

	Clothing and Allied Trades	Ass. Sec./ Secretary Trustees	Annie Warren Elsie McMahon Jessie G. Roper
	Cleaners and Caretakers	Vice Chairman Treasurer	Sarah Wearne Rita Isobel Ridley
	Hospital and Asylum	Secretary Trustee	Ivy Pirani Thelma Herbert
	HCCTRIUW (EG)	Secretary	May Grace
	Laundry Employees	Secretary	Annie Warren
	Tailor and Tailoresses (EG)	Treasurer Trustee	Althea Harridge Annie Murray
	HCCTRIUW	President Treasurer	Cecilia Shelley Violet Grimes
	Clothing and Allied Trades	Secretary Treasurer Chairman Vice Chairman Trustee	Annie Warren " Lily Caine Miss B. O'Doherty Jessie G. Roper
	Bag, Sack and Textiles	Treasurer	Annie McAlpine
	HCCTRIUW (EG)	Secretary	May Grace
	Tobacco and Cigar Workers' Union	Treasurer Trustee	Muriel Haynes Elsie May Connors
	Hospital and Asylum Employees	Secretary	Ivy Pirani

	Laundry Employees	Secretary	Annie Warren
	Tailor and Tailoresses (EG)	Treasurer Trustee	Hazel Sansum Annie Murray
	Cleaners and Caretakers	Executive	Mrs Spalding Mrs Arnold
1928	HCCTRIUW	President	Cecilia Shelley
	Clothing and Allied Trades	Vice Chairman Trustee	B. O'Doherty Jessie Roper
	Cleaners and Caretakers	Vice Chairman "	Mrs Wearne Mrs McCawl
	Tailor and Tailoresses	Treasurer	Hazel Sansum

* NB This is not necessarily a complete list. It includes all the information available from the available fragmentary union records.

APPENDIX 3 41ST NATIONAL CONFERENCE, INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, ALP PLATFORM 1998

INCOME SECURITY

30. Security of employment is fundamental to family income and to all aspects of family life. Therefore the industrial relations system should provide significant protection for the security of workers' employment and of their wages and working conditions.

31. Industrial relations arrangements should serve social as well as purely economic goals. There must be emphasis on both achieving fair outcomes for workers and contributing to efficient enterprises.

32. The industrial relations framework should encourage cooperation not confrontation.

33. A distinguishing characteristic of the Labor approach to industrial relations will be a recognition of the inherently unequal power balance in the workplace. The rights and entitlements of workers, particularly the most vulnerable such as young workers, workers with disabilities and workers from non-English speaking backgrounds, need to be supported and protected as a consequence.

34. This inherent inequality requires priority for a collective approach within the industrial relations system to deliver fairness.

35. The legitimate role of trade unions and their rights to organise, to take action on behalf of their members and on behalf of workers generally, and to bargain collectively, should be enhanced, recognised and defended.

36. The Australian Industrial Relations Commission needs a greater role to be able to prevent and resolve industrial disputes and to act in the interests of fairness and in the national interest.

37. A system of comprehensive and effective award coverage must be central to the security of workers and their wages and working conditions.

38. Workers must be able to participate in and share the benefits of the success of the enterprise or industry for which they work and of the economy

as a whole.

39. The changing life-time employment pattern of men and women requires the industrial relations system to increasingly adapt itself to actively balance work and family responsibilities.

40. While a system of workplace-based collective bargaining will be continued, alternative options for workers to achieve decent increases in wage and conditions should be promoted, including through the award system and industry-based arrangements.

41. Labor will require an open process of reviewing workplace agreements to ensure they meet a reasonable 'no disadvantage' test, to consider the consequences of those workplace bargains for those outside the workplace or particular agreement (eg. other workers, future workers, the unemployed) and to protect the interests of these groups.

42. Labor will ensure that the superannuation system provides:

    - essential protection for employees and for the superannuation contributions made by them or on their behalf;

    - effective choice without undermining successful industry funds;

    - representative and balanced trustee structures; and

    - an independent appeal process.

43. Workers must be protected in relation to occupational health and safety with an emphasis on the prevention of disease, injury and accidents. Rehabilitation programs should be promoted. Compensation should enable injured workers to maintain living standards through an income related benefit until rehabilitation has been achieved or during the period when disability prevents a return to the workforce.

44. Nationally recognised high quality vocational training and skill development opportunities should be available throughout the workforce.

45. Non-discrimination will continue to be a central tenet of Labor's industrial relations policy. This includes a continuing commitment to equal remuneration for women, not just equal pay.

46. Labor will ensure that Australia's domestic industrial relations arrangements are consistent with its international obligations.

47. Labor will:

- actively participate in and promote the development of international labour standards;

- assist countries in our region and beyond to meet those standards;

- promote free and democratic organisations to represent employees and employers; and<

- actively support community campaigns to educate and mobilise the public concerning issues of child labour and forced labour.

A FAIR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SYSTEM

The Legal Framework

A1 The industrial relations legislation should be amended to:

- put fairness back into the legislation;

- give a greater role to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) to act in the national interest and in the interest of fairness;

- restore the powers of the AIRC to deal with any industrial matter;

- re-establish comprehensive and effective award coverage;

- change the emphasis from an approach based on sanctions to one based on conciliation;

- reduce excessive legalism and prohibitive cost barriers to accessing rights; and

- abolish the office of the Employment Advocate.

A2 Within that framework:

- collective bargaining should be promoted through a fair and simple stream of workplace agreements and industry wide agreements, negotiated with trade unions or employees and consistent with International Labour Organisation (ILO) obligations;

- the legislation will abolish the existing Australian Workplace Agreements (AWA) stream, which is secret, unreviewable and unfair. It will provide for arrangements which will:

- ensure a reasonable 'no disadvantage' test is met;

- provide that the AIRC and affected parties are aware of and able to participate in the review of all types of agreements available under the Act;

- ensure the transparency of the agreement review and registration processes;

- accord priority to collective agreements and prohibit discrimination against those who wish to bargain collectively and be represented by a union; and

- provide that workers have access to appropriate information from which to come to informed decisions.

- the trend to casualisation of the workforce should be reduced and priority given to the provision of secure, good quality employment with career prospects;

- the right of all workers to democratic collective representation should be recognised and protection provided from discrimination against workers based on trade union membership or activity;

- the development of representative organisations which can meet common registration and accountability requirements should be fostered, including by necessary training and education;

- a reasonable right of entry should be allowed for union officials to workplaces for the purposes of organisation, recruitment and assistance to workers;

- the protections of the industrial relations system should be extended beyond a narrow definition of employees to include those in employment-type relationships;

- protection against unfair dismissal should be provided to all workers, irrespective of the size of their employer's business; and

- the particular circumstances of public sector workers should be recognised through access to the full range of AIRC powers to resolve industrial disputes and promote collective bargaining, and through paid rates awards where appropriate.

A3 The Trade Practices Act should be removed from applications to industrial matters, which should be regulated by industrial law.

A4 Comprehensive programs aimed at achieving compliance with the regulatory regime and proactive approaches aimed at securing protection of workers' rights and entitlements should be developed and implemented.

A5 Compatibility of Commonwealth and State industrial relations systems should be sought.

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WESTERN AUSTRALIA

WORKPLACE AGREEMENTS ACT 1993

AN ACT to provide for the making of agreements between employers and employees as to their respective rights and obligations, for the registration of such agreements by a public official, for the effect of such agreements, and for their enforcement, to confer qualified immunity for certain industrial action relating to such agreements, and to provide for related matters.

PART 2 — WORKPLACE AGREEMENTS

Division 1 — Purpose and effect of workplace agreements

Workplace agreements

5. (1) Workplace agreements are agreements —

(a) made between employers and employees; and

(b) providing for some or all of the rights and obligations that employers and employees have in relation to one another, including rights and obligations that are to take effect after termination of employment.

(2) A workplace agreement may —

(a) cover a single workplace or a number of workplaces;

(b) apply to the employment relationship between the parties in any place or circumstances.

(3) Nothing in this Act is to be taken to prevent —

(a) any contract of employment and a workplace agreement between an employer and employee being entered into at the same time; or

(b) any contract of employment between an employer and any employee being in the form of a workplace agreement.

Effect of workplace agreement

6. (1) Where a workplace agreement —

(a) has been made between —

(i) an employer and an employee under a contract of employment; or

(ii) an employer and employees under contracts of employment;

and

(b) has come into force,

no award, whether existing or future, applies to —

(c) that contract or those contracts of employment; or

(d) the employer or any such employee as a party to any such contract,

so long as the workplace agreement remains in force.

(2) Where a workplace agreement has been made as mentioned in subsection (1) (a), in relation to any contract of employment, and has come into force, any award provision that applied to that contract immediately before that coming into force is not to be implied into, or in any way read as being part of, the workplace agreement unless the agreement expressly so requires.

(3) A workplace agreement also has the effects described in sections 7B, 7C, 7D and 7E of the *Industrial Relations Act 1979*.

(4) A workplace agreement does not displace the contract of employment between an employer and an employee but while it is in force it has effect —

(a) as if it formed part of that contract; and

(b) regardless of any provision of that contract.

(5) Subsection (1) (c) may be extended by an agreement of the kind described in section 14 (2).

Effect of workplace agreement on accrued entitlements

7. Any entitlement accrued to an employee under the relevant award before the workplace agreement entered into by the employee comes into effect shall be preserved and paid to the employee by the employer at either —

(a) the award rate; or

(b) the rate the employee was paid

whichever was the higher at the time immediately prior to the workplace agreement coming into effect.

Effect of addition of employee as party

8. Where an employee under a contract of employment is added as a party to a collective workplace agreement under section 23 (1) or 40J no award, whether existing or future, applies to —

(a) that contract of employment; or

(b) the employer or the employee as a party to that contract,

so long as the workplace agreement and the agreement under section 23 (1) or 40J remain in force.

[*Section 8 amended by No. 3 of 1997 s.41.*]

Division 2 — Making of workplace agreements

Making of collective workplace agreements

9. A workplace agreement may be entered into between an employer and all or some of the employer's employees.

Making of individual workplace agreements

10. (1) A workplace agreement may be entered into between an employer and one of the employer's employees.

(2) An individual workplace agreement may —

(a) override a collective workplace agreement that could otherwise apply to the employee;

(b) be in addition to an applicable collective workplace agreement; or

(c) be in substitution for any provision of an applicable collective workplace agreement.

(3) A provision of an individual workplace agreement has effect despite any inconsistency with an applicable collective workplace agreement.

Employee organizations may join in collective workplace agreements

11. (1) Subject to subsection (2), an organization of employees may as part of a collective workplace agreement undertake to the employer and the employees under the agreement that it will conduct its affairs —

(a) in a way that is consistent with the observance of the agreement; and

(b) so as not to incite or encourage any breach of the agreement,

by the parties to the agreement.

(2) An undertaking under subsection (1) cannot be included in a workplace agreement unless the employer and the employees who are parties to it have in writing agreed to its inclusion.

(3) An organization that has given an undertaking under subsection (1) as part of a workplace agreement is to be treated as a party to the agreement for the purposes of sections 35 (3) and 39, but not for the purposes of section 16 (2), 21, 24, 29, 30 or 88 (4).

Persons bound by workplace agreement

12. (1) A workplace agreement is binding on —

(a) the parties to the agreement, but subject to sections 14 (1) and 32;

(b) an employer that is a successor, assignee or transmittee, whether immediate or not, to or of the whole or part of the business of an employer that is a party to the agreement; and

(c) an organization that gives an undertaking under section 11, to the extent of that undertaking.

(2) Where an employer becomes bound by a workplace agreement as mentioned in subsection (1) (b) any right or entitlement accrued to an employee under the agreement before the succession, assignment or transmission is binding on, and enforceable against, the employer to the extent that it is not enforced against the previous employer.

(3) A workplace agreement entered into by a person who is under 18 years of age binds the person as if he or she were of full age.

Disposition etc. of business

13. (1) An employer who becomes bound by a workplace agreement by operation of section 12 (1) (b) is to be taken to be a party to every contract of employment that it governs.

(2) A disposition or transmission of the whole or part of a business of an employer does not affect the continuation in force of a relevant workplace agreement to which that employer is a party if another employer becomes bound by that workplace agreement under section 12 (1) (b).

Termination of contract of employment

14. (1) Where a contract of employment of an employee comes to an end, a workplace agreement that governs that contract no longer applies to that person except where an agreement under subsection (2) provides otherwise.

(2) An employer and a person who is employed by the employer may agree in writing that a specified workplace agreement is to apply to that person as an employee of that employer during a specified period, not exceeding 12 months, regardless of the number of separate contracts of employment between them that come into existence during that period.

(3) Subsection (1) does not affect rights or obligations under a workplace agreement that are to take effect after termination of employment.

Bargaining agents

15. (1) The employer, the employees or any employee are entitled to be represented by a bargaining agent

(a) in any negotiations for a workplace agreement; or

(b) in connection with the operation of a workplace agreement.

(2) A bargaining agent may be any person or group of persons.

(3) The authority of a bargaining agent to represent an employer or an employee under this section —

(a) must be given in writing by that employer or employee;

(b) may be terminated by that employer or employee at any time by notice in writing to the bargaining agent; and

(c) is automatically terminated on the registration of that agreement under Division 4 or section 40I, unless the bargaining agent is authorized for the purposes of subsection (1) (b).

(4) A copy of an authority given to a bargaining agent under subsection (3) (a) must be given to each other party who is not represented by that agent.

(5) The fact that an employer or an employee has appointed a bargaining agent under this section does not prevent the employer or employee communicating with any other party or that other party's bargaining agent.

(6) Where an employer or an employee has appointed a bargaining agent under this section any other party must not —

(a) refuse to recognize that appointment or deal with some other person as if he or she were that person's bargaining agent; or

(b) coerce or induce, or attempt to coerce or induce, the employer or employee to terminate the authority of the bargaining agent.

Penalty: $2 000.

(7) Nothing in subsection (6) is to be read as requiring any person to enter into or continue negotiations for a workplace agreement.

(8) In this section **"employer"** and **"employee"** include persons who wish to negotiate with a view to entering into a contract of employment and a workplace agreement that will govern that contract.

[*Section 15 amended by No. 3 of 1997 s.41.*]

APPENDIX 5

WOMEN'S PROFESSIONAL STATUS AND INTERNAL CONFLICTS IN THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN TEACHERS UNION IN THE 1930S

Controversy over whether to remain in a male dominated union or seek female representation erupted in the South Australian Teachers' Union (SATU) in the early 1930s. Several issues were involved: men's influence in the SATU and its failure to act on female teachers' claims; controversy between women over whether to pursue claims through female representation on the current union executive or separately; personal clashes between the separatist's leader Phoebe Watson (a primary school teacher) and May Mills (President of the Women High School Teachers' Association [WHSTA]); and divisions based on the perceived difference in status between primary and high school teachers.

The ensuing debate illustrates the complexity associated with women's industrial aspirations. In this case two strong individualistic women were pitted against each other at the same time as women unionist's aims were opposed by male teachers. It would be more simple if conflict between the women could be clearly defined as personal. However, it is as likely that divisions related the degree of radicalism which each believed should be adopted in approaches to unionisation and education. What is clearer is that women teachers believed that their aims could not be met through the male dominated union.

Women teacher's demand for equality provided the catalyst for formation of the South Australian Women Teachers' Education Guild (SAWTEG) under Watson's leadership. [1] The SATU had defeated a proposal to form a salaries committee with equal representation of men and women. Although offered what Watson considered the "sop" of a conciliation committee, she believed that secession provided the only solution. [2]

Disagreement over the salaries committee built on

Watson's earlier dissatisfaction with the union's refusal to support a woman senior lecturer and women's warden who had experienced difficulties at the Teachers Training College. This particular controversy involved not only the issue of women's status within the Education Department but the value of progressive ideas in education. [3]

SAWTEG's aims suggest that it served two interests, those of women teachers and those of progressive educationists. For example, one of its first undertakings was 'to care for the welfare of the child and to study new trends of thought in education.' [4] Plans to produce a monthly periodical with contributions on world wide educational questions and modern teaching methods as well as matters directly affecting classroom work further supports the view that the SAWTEG promoted progressive attitudes in both staffing and education. Additional aims stressed a demand for opportunities for women and improvements in wages and conditions.

Women's decision was complicated because high school teachers were represented on the SATU executive through WHSTA. Women teachers were forced to make a choice between this representation in the established union or joining the independent SAWTEG. Their decision was further complicated by the possibility that SAWTEG could focus on primary school teachers to the detriment of other women teachers because Watson taught in the primary sector.

Mills used this fear to foster concern about SAWTEG, holding a meeting to publicise her organisation's disaffection with SATU but proposing her own solution. [5]

With Mills's opposition the breakaway SAWTEG was difficult to maintain. Although Watson circularised women teachers outlining her aims before holding meetings this was often not enough and dissent was evident early in the discussion. In all, only six hundred women resigned from the SATU and joined the SAWTEG - fewer than half the women members. [6]

Mills claimed that Watson had surrounded the

establishment of the SAWTEG in secrecy. However, Watson defended the secret meeting to discuss resignation from the union on the basis that officials' antagonism would have destroyed women's independent action. In addition, she claimed that her situation in the union over the previous two years had been a strain because of officials' attitudes. [7]

The immediacy of action at this time was considered important as a case involving women teachers' conditions was pending. Watson claimed, 'a democratic organisation for women, run by women and to allow for representation from all bodies of women teachers' [8] would assist their representation.

By 1937 the SAWTEG was established. However, a meeting of the WHSTA had decided on a two thirds majority that they should remain in the SATU - a letter to that effect being signed by Mills. The arguments for the decision were that they 'should not be stampeded', [9] that country teachers should be given a chance to vote and that the SAWTEG constitution should be studied with care. [10] Another meeting, called to give country women the opportunity to attend, considered several options: to remain in the union; to withdraw and join the new SAWTEG; to remain and watch further development or to 'resign as a salutary lesson to the men...' [11]

Meetings served to publicise women's dissatisfaction with the union and the President retaliated. He claimed that the women's dissatisfaction was based on exaggerated claims and, as women had encouraged his candidacy for President, he was surprised. In particular, he suggested that women had won many benefits through the union, such as the Emergency Relief Fund, Legal Defence Fund, a Library Cash Purchases Scheme and provision of lecture notes. He was critical of what he believed to have been precipitate action in forming a breakaway group to represent women alone. [12]

Despite disagreement between Mills and Watson over tactics, they were united in their belief that men in the union were not effectively, or sympathetically, representing

women union members. Mills saw voting power in the SATU as the root of the trouble as men were able to out-vote women sixty votes to seventeen. Men were described as opposed to, or unco-operative, about increases in women's salaries, although some problems were blamed on the autocratic nature of one man.

Proposals to join SAWTEG were again considered by WHSTA members in 1939. Although some regretted that reconciliation between men and women teachers had not been effected, the women determined to take a major step to achieve recognition of their value to the profession and the union. They considered once again joining the SAWTEG, but Mills again expressed the fear that the high school women teachers could suffer at the hands of the primary school teachers, 'in somewhat the same way as the men have passed over the women in the present union'. [13]

In attempt to remedy this, an approach was made to the SAWTEG to represent interest rather than numbers through delegates on the SAWTEG Council and Advisory Committee. Watson proposed to have the Constitution changed to allow this and Mills advocated that, if effected, the high school women teachers join the SAWTEG. However, Mills's "Review of Troubles" [14] suggests that she was still unprepared to leave SATU. It outlined additional problems, noting that women may be 'emotional and biased and whether a change may be from the frying pan into the fire'. [15] She saw the choice as one of joining women where 'jealousy and hysteria' [16] could be an issue as opposed to 'staying and suffering', [17] concluding that high school teachers were at the mercy of everyone.

In 1940 another approach was made to Mills through a friend who sent her a SAWTEG circular. The SAWTEG had been successful in several areas - it had increased its advantages and power by having attained registration in the Industrial Court. This gave the women's union the same status in representing their claims as that afforded the SATU. By representing claims the SAWTEG had been successful

in raising the salaries of the lowest paid teachers, the country women. The SAWTEG's independent status had been defended by the President who suggested that, 'The important thing is that the women's endeavours to state and prosecute their demands should be neither stifled nor hampered by those who have...though they may still be unconscious of its possession...an axe to grind'. [18]

The SAWTEG had established itself as the women teachers' representative in arbitration and by so doing had created a unified group, 'not antagonistic or inimical to the interests of men, but...firmly convinced that representations can be made on behalf of women by a body of women teachers working with and for women.' [19]

It appears that the conflict of interests between primary and high school teachers, as interpreted by Mills, led her to ignore the petition. A look at her sketchy autobiographical notes may provide the answer. Mills had two positions of status: her authority in the WHSTA and her success in the male dominated union. She was also closely involved with the Education Department committee work on text books, geographical research, the visual aids library and was also on the Advisory Board on Education. These positions could have placed her in opposition to Watson's group's stance on progressive education. Mills also achieved personal distinction by remaining in the SATU when in 1950 she became the only woman to win the presidency. Her other activities outside the Education Department were also in authority roles, as vice-president of the NCW and as a member of the Cinema and Television Council, Youth Coordinating Committee and similar bodies. [20]

In 1958 Mills stood for parliament as a Liberal-Country Party candidate and lost by fewer than a thousand votes in a thirty four thousand vote electorate. Her party political activity had begun as early as the 1920s when she helped her father, leader of the Country Party, to organise several districts. She was a political organiser for women in the Women for Canberra Movement in 1943. [21]

All this activity indicates that Mills may have had little desire to become a follower in a women's group, despite her possible sympathy with its cause. Rather than a vehicle for progressive policies, the South Australian example illustrates women's various avenues of attaining their aims within the industrial scene. Some women may choose to remain a pressure group within the union, gaining delegates on the executive and maybe having the option of gaining positions of authority in a mixed gender group. The alternative, to provide a separatist group where women provide leadership, organise industrial action and are the sole beneficiaries may also be successful.

In the South Australian teaching profession in the 1930s and 1940s the conflict of personal interest and decisions on how best to manipulate the political circumstances show women engaged in activity to improve women's industrial position limited by similar problems to those experienced by men. The conflict highlights the dilemma faced by women when allegiance to a progressive or conservative approach is not the only point at issue. Women had to make the choice between coming to terms with a male dominated union, in which women's interests were subjugated, and joining a women's group which was ideologically opposed to their interests.

Mills's conservative politics are a possible reason for her ultimate success in the union, and may also have undermined her determination to seek major changes to women's working conditions. On the other hand, the union represented the majority of teachers, retaining its legitimacy when dealing with female teachers' conditions. The SAWTEG had some success as it also had access to the Arbitration Court to act on behalf of women teachers. However, it could not claim to speak for all women teachers. Conflict over whether the separatist movement was the best option for pursuing women's industrial aims remained unsolved, both groups failing to promote the women teachers' cause with long term success.

1. SAWTEG Papers, State Library, Adelaide.
2. ibid.
3. ibid.
4. ibid.
5. SATU Papers, State Library, Adelaide.
6. SAWTEG Papers, op. cit.
7. SATU Papers, op. cit.
8. SAWTEG Papers, op. cit.
9. WHSTA Papers, State Library, Adelaide
10. ibid
11. ibid
12. SATU Papers, op. cit.
13. WHSTA Papers, op. cit.
14. ibid
15. ibid
16. ibid.
17. ibid
18. SAWTEG Papers, op. cit.
19. ibid
20. SATU Papers, op. cit.
21. ibid.

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Note: Where complete dates are not cited these newspaper clippings were amongst the Evelyn Wood Papers. As numerous un-named and undated newspaper clippings have been used (as referred to above, in the Evelyn Wood Papers) the list of newspapers used has been as detailed as possible. This is intended to give the reader a better understanding of the likely period and media outlets which have contributed to the information in this thesis.

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