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THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT
IN NEW SOUTH WALES AND VICTORIA, 1918-1938

by

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of History University of Sydney
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ABBREVIATIONS

ADB  Australian Dictionary of Biography
ALP  Australian Labor Party
ANL  Australian National Library
APP  Australian Parliamentary Papers
CPP  Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers
CWA  Country Women's Association
ML   Mitchell Library
NSW  New South Wales
NSWPD New South Wales Parliamentary Papers
NSWSA New South Wales State Archives
SMH  Sydney Morning Herald
VPP  Victorian Parliamentary Papers
WCTU Woman's Christian Temperance Union
YWCA Young Women's Christian Association
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

After the vote was won Australian women organised in larger numbers than ever before. The popular view is that the women's movement disappeared into limbo in the inter-war years. The contention of this thesis is that that was not so. In 1977 Kay Daniels wrote in the introduction to Women in Australia: An Annotated Guide to Records that the women's movement in Australia was largely a 'post-vote movement'. With the benefit of the research undertaken by a team of women for International Women's Year Daniels perceived a continuity to the women's movement stretching from the nineteenth century to the 1970s. Her observation has encouraged me in my investigation of the organised activities of women in the inter-war years.

In the early years of this century, newly-enfranchised women joined forces with other women citizens in already established societies or moved to form new organisations. Some were educational and some narrowly concerned with aspects of women's welfare or the care of children. Others were intent on achieving reforms and advancing the cause of professional women, of domestic servants or of 'factory girls'. The range was as wide as the affairs of women. In loose affiliation through the National Councils of Women individual organisations found support from other sympathetic associations. Societies

affiliated to the National Council of Women were not bound by Council resolutions but the appointment of standing committees in a number of key areas of concern ensured continuity to discussions and decisions. The executive and standing committees of the National Councils in effect developed policies and a program for member societies while other societies often co-operated with the Council in campaigns originating in this way. Cross-membership and multiple office holding encouraged a unity of focus and a commonality of ideas among women reformers and voluntary workers.

The continuity from the nineteenth to the twentieth century which Daniels asserts, becomes evident when the campaigns undertaken by women in the 1920s and 1930s are examined. Issues concerning motherhood, home and family still occupied a central position in organised women's campaigns in the inter-war years. The role of wife and mother was the most representative of the occupations open to women and continued to be the reality for most adult women. While the average number of children born to each woman was also declining, motherhood continued to have an overwhelming impact on women's lives by affecting their long-term health, their ability to earn wages, their self-esteem and the extent of their involvement in public affairs. As motherhood deeply affected the lives of many women it is not surprising that a large number of

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2. See Peter F. McDonald, Marriage in Australia: Age at First Marriage and Proportions Marrying, 1860-1971, Australian National University, Canberra, 1974, pp. 184-85.
women's organisations felt justified in placing a high priority on the need to ensure that the material conditions and status of women within the marriage union were enhanced and that the special needs of mothers were addressed.

The activities undertaken by the inter-war women's movement have often been described as limited and limiting due to their domestic orientation and welfare focus. Both 'domestic' and 'welfare' are inadequate apppellations for these interests. The women's movement's utilisation of the language of separate spheres and of ideas about woman's 'proper place' has lead to misconceptions about their intent. Support was given to the teaching of domestic science for example, as a means to develop housekeeping skills in girls while still at school and also for its potential to be socially applied under the direction of women for the benefit of women. As an area of professional expertise it held the promise of an expanding range of employment for educated women. At the same time it was hoped that the domestic scientist's teaching and research would transform conditions in the home, contributing to a redefinition of domestic duties as 'work' and thus a service to be substantially rewarded. In these concerns inter-war women resembled the women's movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. What becomes a distinctive feature of the inter-war years is the input of professional women. More consciously than in the pre-war years educated members of the women's movement sought to utilise professional knowledge for the benefit of all
women. The interests of educated women did not stop with the private sphere. Areas of primary concern included education and employment opportunities for women, the entire range of women's working conditions, domestic or otherwise, prevention of sexual abuse, women's legal status, their advancement to public office and the enhancement of their political influence. No longer were women activists merely seeking to extend into the public sphere the knowledge and moral attitudes which were woman's by virtue of her domestic role, but rather it was hoped to apply to all women's issues a knowledge which transcended the public/private dichotomy, a knowledge which was scientific.

To a significant degree the inter-war women's movement understood that, as Joan Kelly put it, 'woman's place is not a separate sphere or domain of existence but a position within social existence generally'\textsuperscript{3}. Women performed 'women's work' at home, in a voluntary capacity in the community and in the labour market. This pattern of work left woman subordinate to man in both private and public sphere activities. Out of the collective activity of women a group consciousness of this subordination arose leading to the development of a number of avenues of redress. On occasions the political channels chosen to pursue certain goals led directly to pressure group activity in the state and federal parliamentary arenas and to attempts to gain

direct representation for women on public bodies. At other times the operations of 'non-political' associations and institutions managed by women allowed a more subtle outlet for these political energies. While certain groups within the women's movement pressed publicly for women's legal, economic and political rights, others lobbied for an extension of state services and benefits to mothers and children. Some groups built up new institutions and evolved practical programs which offered much needed services to women. The larger women's networks, particularly the National Councils of Women, when formulating issues needing attention, also helped set the direction science would take in those years. All these strategies allowed women to lobby for material improvements, to enlarge the limits of their influence and to assert contrasting values and visions which would challenge the organisation of social and political life in Australia.

Above all, the women's movement operated in these years to challenge the subordination of its concerns to those of men. Insofar as the movement brought the domestic and work-force concerns of women together into the public arena of debate it challenged the allocation of political significance. Even more than this it sought to overturn the designation of women's own interests as 'non-political' and thus marginal to the mainstream concerns of political life. If we understand politics as involving the struggle over the distribution of power between and among groups these women emerge very clearly
as perceiving the way in which the power distribution between men and women was unequal. The factors motivating women to form separate organisations also provided them with a base from which to question their exclusion from power and from which to posit a hitherto unacknowledged challenge to this relegation.

Historiography and Methodology

Issues of definition and terminology and questions about the concepts brought to bear on the writing of women's history have increasingly engaged the attention of feminist historians. Categories and concepts gleaned from existing theoretical works initially seem useful but ultimately prove incapable of encompassing or explaining women's experience. Jill Mathews explored this dilemma in *Good and Mad Women*, in particular raising questions about the conventional division of social life into public and private spheres. In her discussion of the meaning of 'work' for women Mathews noted that many women move at different stages of their lives from the marketplace, where they are paid for their work, to the home to take up unpaid duties; some later return to wage labour, some remain as unpaid domestic labourers and others undertake the 'double-shift'. This process can be repeated a number


of times, depending on circumstances and needs, in an individual woman's life. Yet the dichotomy of private/public which permeates male history consigns women to the private and men to the public spheres of existence. 'Work' is held to fall within the realm of public activities. The home, a 'refuge' from the vicissitudes of work life, is held to be part if not the centre of the private realm. As Mathews demonstrates, the home and the marketplace have never been as separate as this dichotomy assumes. Rather than a refuge the home/private sphere has been the site for the unpaid work of housewives, the paid work of servants and domestic industries such as the provision of board and lodgings, the sale of home-made produce and the performance of outwork\(^6\). While 'work' and 'worker' are assumed to apply to the circumstances of the post-industrial skilled labourer who was male a whole realm of female experience is distorted or denied.

If public discourse is conducted largely in terms developed to describe and catalogue the experience of men, the reality of women's past lives can only be perceived dimly. The terms and concepts used by historians define the questions to be asked, determine the areas in which interest will be concentrated and establish the topics which will be attributed with historical significance. How then are we to articulate women's experience fully when by necessity we draw on a vocabulary of ideas which is masculine? Mathews suggests that the intitial solution lies in the conscious dissection of universalist categories such as 'work', 'parenthood' or 'sexuality' to

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reveal their gendered differences. Further to this re-examination of basic language and concepts she counsels the need to discard those structural concepts, such as the allocation of home and work to separate spheres, which more appropriately elucidate a male perspective. In its place she posits the need for a methodology based on flexibility. Rigid categories of analysis are replaced by an approach which involves circling around the same spot for a while, repeating the same point in juxtaposition with a number of different points, allowing categories to overflow and overlap in order to encompass a more integrated understanding of women's experience.\textsuperscript{7} Mathews stresses the need to redefine and refine language concerning women and their experiences. That advice underlies this thesis. A flexible approach to categories of analysis can help return concepts and terms to the context in which women used them and thus restore the plenitude of women's experience.

The narrowness of vision imposed by the male-dominated nature of the available theoretical armoury is nowhere more apparent than in the historiography of organised women's activities. To date those concerned to uncover or assess the public or political role played by Australian women have generally begun their studies with the agitation for the suffrage and concluded with its attainment. This undue concentration on the history of the suffrage campaign has overshadowed the history of the late nineteenth

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., p. 28.
and early twentieth century women's movement and the history of women's subsequent involvement in public affairs. Much energy has been directed to the task of supporting or refuting the Biskup/MacKenzie thesis that women did not actively seek the vote. MacKenzie attributed the low status and lack of political power of Australian women in the 1960s to the small scale and largely illogical nature of the suffrage campaign. In championing the vote, he wrote, women gained a political role which most did not want and which they would not use to any great effect. The assertion that suffrage supporters were essentially a 'small coterie' and that enfranchisement was in some way an 'act of true male philanthropy' has since been effectively qualified. A number of studies have demonstrated that in the decade following 1885 women were mobilised in large numbers in all states behind the suffrage and organisations whose aims embraced female enfranchisement. In


Victoria, the state which witnessed the most protracted agitation for the suffrage, the United Council for Women's Suffrage had over thirty-two affiliates by 1900 ranging from suburban and rural Progressive Leagues, the Victorian Lady Teachers' Association and the Central Methodist Mission to the Woman's Christian Temperance Union [WCTU] and the Trades Hall Council. The involvement of the WCTU in campaigns in most states ensured that suffrage supporters extended far beyond a 'small coterie'. In concert with other suffrage groups in 1891 the WCTU presented a petition to the Victorian parliament with thirty thousand signatures supporting the right of women to vote.

Eventually it was men who enfranchised women. It could hardly have been otherwise as the various state legislatures and the Federal Convention were exclusively male. But far from being the indifferent recipients of a beneficent male gesture women demonstrated loudly and at length for their rights, compiling 'monster petitions', canvassing electorates...


and political candidates and educating the community through lectures, meetings and publications.

The historiography which makes the conferral of the vote the contentious question ignores more important questions about women's political involvement. In particular the assumption that the vote was the focus of women's movement concerns casts into shadow the wider interests of its members during and after the suffrage campaign. Anne Summers challenged the notion that Australian women made no use of the vote and that their political participation after enfranchisement was minimal. She saw the pervasiveness of this myth as a direct result of the denial of women's involvement in the suffrage campaigns: 'in suppressing the existence of the movement the myth-makers have buried its ideas, including its views on the uses to which the vote was to be put'. But while Summers and other feminist historians have since resurrected the ideas and activities of the wider women's movement at the turn of the century they have been hampered by difficulties conceptualising the nature of feminist activism and the dimensions of 'politics' and 'radical' political behaviour. The failure to encompass the widest aims of the early women's movement is partly the result of applying concepts and attempting to fit the experience of these women into categories which were male specific; in particular, class analysis. A recurrent theme in the historiography is the allegation that the women's movement was blinkered by its middle class focus.

15. Summers, Damned Whores, p. 349.
Its domestic orientation, welfare interests and concern for 'social purity' are taken as evidence of just such a limiting factor. Few as yet have understood those interests as pointing to a sound appreciation of a gender order in the absence of the use of that term by the women themselves. Some recent works have served to broaden appreciation of the complex nature of the social reform aspirations of suffrage campaigners. Judith Allen warns against the use of 'theoretical precepts established without the consultation or participation of women'. The depiction of feminism as part of the history of liberalism and emerging social democracy and the labelling of early feminists as 'bourgeois worthy ladies', Allen points out, distorts the history of feminism so as to 'reduce it to a topic of conventional political history easily assimilated by conventional methods'. Lost thereby is any understanding of the unique nature of women's unprecedented political involvement.

Allen's study of Sydney suffragist Rose Scott reveals that the legislative measures she and other feminists sought to enact did not automatically accept masculine conceptions of what was politically significant or even a valid subject for public debate. Scott's efforts to

17. Ibid.
grapple with the problems of workplace seduction, illegitimacy and prostitution were scoffed at as 'wowserism': such things were 'natural' and thus non-negotiable, best relegated to the private world and not paraded across the public consciousness. Lately historians have criticised Scott's crusade for another reason, seeing it as merely the imposition of 'bourgeois sexual morality' on working-class women 19. Yet Allen perceives that Scott, in the campaign to raise the age of consent, challenged a sexual order which left young working women particularly vulnerable. Scott's frequent resort to images derived from the prevailing maternal ethos, to make her political point, has also led some historians to assume that she subscribed to the confining ideology of separate spheres 20. But her campaigns around the turn of the century stemmed not only from an understanding of the sexual exploitation to which underpaid working women were exposed but the parallel tyranny economic dependence imposed on mothers of all classes. In light of this, Allen cautions, Scott's 'rhetorical demand for the exaltation of the skills and status of motherhood is best not taken at face value' 21.

Scott's depiction of the post-suffrage movement as a movement in decline has been picked up by successive


historians who have variously assumed that the removal of the vote as a focal point, the reassertion of different class views and the domestic orientation of many women's groups fragmented what remained of the early women's movement. They have overlooked the essential legacy of the suffrage movement. The vote itself was not the unifying factor for women reformers at the turn of the century. The cement for their co-operative efforts was the perception that power in Australian society was unequally distributed along sex lines. The suffrage campaign reinforced this perception which continued to provide coherence and cohesion to the women's movement after the vote was won.

Instead of representing a period of decline, the years following the enfranchisement of women in Australia witnessed an escalation of women's political campaigns. Much of this activity has either been ignored in accounts of inter-war politics or when it has been considered the tendency is to discount it as welfare not politics. As welfare it is considered less 'radical' than the political goal of suffragists. A recent collection titled Women, Social Welfare and the State\(^{22}\) questions the depiction of women's welfare interests as marginal or essentially conservative concerns. Where Summers, Dixson and Connell and Irving\(^{23}\) enforce the notion that all

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state intervention has the effect of maintaining the existing system of class and gender inequalities, Baldock and Cass perceive a separate role for women in the contest between classes and interest groups. That delineation is possible because their approach and that of other contributors to the collection is to highlight 'the aspirations of women's groups, the demands they have made and the concessions they have gained', 24. The fact that the benefit sought often fell far short of its mark or was introduced in much amended form is not reason to discount the original perceptions of women activists.

Women with dependant children have constituted the majority of recipients of welfare services while women have also comprised the majority of the voluntary army of welfare distributors. In the inter-war period the women's movement acted to maintain this identification of women with welfare and concomitantly to strengthen women's influence on welfare policy. Social work, both because it grew out of women's traditional charitable concerns and because of its caring, nurturing character, was conceived of as an ideal occupation for women. The key role taken by the National Councils of Women in establishing social work as a profession in this period

has been noted in several recent works. Its development partly solved the important problem of providing suitable employment for educated women. Less well recognised has been the fact that the role of social worker was but one of a number of caretaker roles developed by the women's movement in these years. As agents for improvement they called for the training and appointment of women as public 'investigators, inspectors, medical officers, councillors, guardians, health visitors ... (and) lecturers, teachers and matrons'. The very 'future of the race', they argued, depended on the 'further development of women's work in the most womanly groove'.

Reiger and Mathews have commented on the intervention of professionals or 'experts' in private life to devalue women's expertise and undermine their autonomy as care-takers. Both maintain women were not merely passive


28. Mathews, Good and Mad Women.
recipients of new scientific formulae for 'efficient' housewifery or child-rearing techniques but neither adequately investigates the extent to which women themselves, especially in their new roles as professionals, contributed to the redefinition of household management and child care. Heightened professional interest in the home in turn provided women reformers with powerful allies in their battles to enhance the material conditions of women and children.

Most historians assume politics is about the process of governing the nation or state or the clash of class interests, all of which take place in the public sphere. Issues pertaining to the private or domestic sphere such as the double standard of morality, woman's economic dependency as wife and mother or the differential wage policy for men and women are seen either as the result of the natural order and therefore immutable, or as involving moral rather than political questions. The equation of politics with the articulation of relationships within an already given power structure, such as the family, is an understanding implicit in women's movement activities but has not been incorporated into existing accounts.

The historiography of inter-war feminism has tended to focus on single organisations particularly those seen as 'political' in the masculine sense of engaging in lobbying in the parliamentary arena or attempting to gain direct political power by running candidates for public office. There are several studies of the United Associations of Women, the Australian Federation of
Women Voters and of leading figures in both organisations. The United Associations of Women was the New South Wales [NSW] affiliate of the Australian Federation of Women Voters from the late 1920s. Both organisations have been categorised as examples of 'equal rights' feminism in that they were primarily concerned with the passage of legislation which would give women equal rights with men in marriage, divorce and guardianship matters, in access to employment and in relation to the payment of their work. The United Associations of Women also ran a Women's Campaign Council in the 1930s to support the candidature for public office of women, regardless of party affiliation, who promoted women's rights.

In contrast the much larger National Council of Women has not attracted similar critical attention from historians. In many accounts the Councils appear as the philanthropic or conservative backdrop to the more 'political' or 'radical' activities of the United Associations and the Australian Federation of Women Voters. In some cases this evaluation arises from an uncritical acceptance of the views of its rivals. A closer re-examination reveals that in the principles they supported and the campaigns they pursued, the Councils and the Federation were far closer than previously acknowledged. There was a marked meshing of ideas, individuals and affiliates between the two networks. Because of their focus on single organisations historians have been prone to impose categories, such as 'equal rights' or 'domestic' feminist, or 'political' and 'non-political' association, which unduly inflate one aspect of a group's activities to fit a conventional framework.


Much of the biography is similarly preoccupied with a limited notion of 'politics'. Recent studies of parliamentary candidates reveal that women generally launched their campaigns after experience in and with the support of women's organisations. Browne, in his study of Eleanor Glencross and Ivy Weber, notes that both the Housewives' Association and the WCTU canvassed on the candidates' behalf. But the involvement of these associations, so often considered 'domestic' and 'non-political' on the basis of their ordinary programs, raises contradictions which have not been explored. The focus on the highly visible and indisputably political activities of individual women candidates relegates such questions to the background and to a certain extent women candidates' 'exceptional' position sustains the view that the women's movement in general maintained a non-political stance. While the National Council of Women had the capacity to field women candidates it was generally uninterested and at times actively opposed to this initiative. This reticence was not the result of political indifference. Nor was it merely a product


of women's inherent powerlessness in the face of a male dominated party system. It reflected instead the Council's critical assessment of the relevance of the party political system to the aspirations of women.

Women in Council

The first Australian National Council of Women was formed in NSW in 1896 to co-ordinate and advance women's philanthropic and reform activities; it began this task with eleven affiliated societies. When the Victorian National Council of Women was launched in 1902 it had thirty-five affiliates; testament not only to the popularity of the Council but to the rapid growth of organisations among women in the years in which the franchise continued to be withheld from Victorian women. This growth continued though some diversion of efforts is evident during the war years. The National Councils of Women in 1918 had fifty-eight affiliates in Victoria and forty in NSW. The Council's appeal was the result in part of its loosely defined co-ordinating role. The constitution of the Victorian Council explained that:

The Council is organized in the interests of no one propaganda nor does it ally itself to any political or sectarian party, nor does it claim any power over its members except that of sympathy and suggestion ...

34. National Council of Women of NSW, Seventy Five Years, p. 3.
35. Gillan, Brief History of the National Council of Women of Victoria, p. 9.
The Council was inclined to present itself as non-political though it was often engaged in campaigns which were political. By distancing itself from party politics and by respecting the autonomy of affiliates, it drew into its ranks many societies for whom membership of an overtly political association was unacceptable.

In 1918 a large majority of affiliates to the National Councils of Women stated they were non-party and non-political. Amongst the earliest to join the Victorian Council were the Melbourne Ladies' Benevolent Society and the Methodist Neglected Children's Aid Society. In NSW early participants included the Queen's Jubilee Fund which gave small cash payments to impoverished ladies and the Ministering Children's Fresh Air League which arranged holidays in the country or at the seaside for needy children. Other affiliates tended to the 'sick poor' in their own homes, as was the case with the Melbourne District Nursing Society, or treated them in charity hospitals. The Women's Hospital and Dispensary in Sydney and the Queen Victoria and Women's Hospitals in Melbourne joined their state Councils. Kindergartens, day nurseries and creches for the children of the inner city, homes for unmarried mothers and their infants, halfway houses for discharged women prisoners, hostels and clubs for young working women and eventide homes for the aged infirm were among the other institutions and associations which swelled the ranks of the National Councils of Women.
The National Councils functioned as intelligence departments for 'social workers'\textsuperscript{36}. Council members organised lectures from experts and through family and professional connections gathered additional information on the latest theories and practices. The Councils aimed to avoid duplication of services and to keep affiliate societies in touch. They also intervened on behalf of affiliates: in 1913 in Victoria the Council lobbied the government for representation on the newly constituted Charities Board and later it sponsored the application of the Melbourne Ladies Benevolent Society and the Melbourne District Nursing Society to administer the state's baby clinics\textsuperscript{37}. Women's philanthropic activities had expanded in the years before 1918 and so also had the state's authority in this area. The ability of women to control developments where the state chose to initiate services was severely limited and the National Councils of Women moved by necessity into the realm of pressure group activity.

The WCTU was a foundation member of both the NSW and the Victorian Council and exemplified in its own organisation and program this move into political pressure group activity. Abolition of the drink trade

\textsuperscript{36} Argus, 25 April 1919, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{37} Norris, Champions of the Impossible, p. 29; N. Rosenthal, People Not Cases: The Royal District Nursing Society, Melbourne, 1974, p. 32; Argus, 12 May 1917, p. 6; 29 June 1917, p. 6; 16 August 1917, p. 6; SMH, 15 August 1917, p. 6.
remained the primary purpose of the WCTU although it rapidly developed a system of Departments which drew it inevitably to seek political influence. Its concern about conditions of employment for women and the ill effects of drink on family incomes pointed it towards supporting votes for women and engaging in educational programs. Conditions of female prisoners and the appointment of police matrons, equal pay for equal work and the provision of playgrounds were among the causes which it took up. The WCTU's own organisation was extensive, penetrating rural and urban districts, yet it looked to the forum of the National Councils to publicise its campaigns. During the war a rejuvenated WCTU was joined in its campaigns for 'early closing' and for the abolition of 'shouting' by the Council and several of the larger affiliates including the Housewives' Association and the Young Women's Christian Association [YWCA] 38. The WCTU eschewed party alignment considering women's issues to be 'above party'. While the temperance movement in NSW was drawn into a de facto alliance with the Liberal and Reform and Liberal parties, the WCTU maintained its distance from party politics. It believed that the

party system did not offer women the opportunity to voice their real needs and aspirations. For its women-centred campaigns the Union found an alternative and important support structure in the National Councils of Women.

For smaller organisations membership of the Council enabled them to draw others into their campaigns. The Feminist Club formed in Sydney in 1914 to work for 'equality of status, opportunity and payments between men and women', began its campaign for the removal of legal barriers to the entry of women to the legal profession in 1915. The Women's Progressive Association, not then a member of the National Council of Women, had earlier initiated the campaign. In 1917 the Feminist Club made a request through the Council for support. In response the Child Study Association, Salvation Army, YWCA, Women's Commonwealth Patriotic Association, Women's Reform League and Prisoners' Aid Association joined the campaign. The deputation led by the National Council of Women in 1918 represented over forty women's societies. With the passage of the Women's Legal Status Act the Women's Progressive Association sought and was


granted affiliation with the Council, possibly appreciating the influence of unified action.\textsuperscript{42}

The National Council of Women had a corporate identity through its elected executive and its standing committees. The standing committees covered Child Welfare, Education, Public Health, Equal Moral Standards, Temperance, Peace and Arbitration, Immigration and Trades and Professions. Each committee of five to ten women under long-serving convenors monitored social conditions and legislative proposals and on occasions drafted bills for the executive to submit to the government. The executive wrote letters to the press, organised petitions, headed delegations to Ministers and lobbied individual politicians. Continuity and unity was secured through this structure. In this way the Council helped widen the concerns and preoccupations of its non-political member societies while enhancing the political influence of those affiliates which were organised for reform.

The National Council of Women frequently proclaimed it knew neither class nor creed and that any society which was organised in the interest of women and children was eligible for membership. The Council's non-party political stance was at times difficult to sustain. To campaign effectively it had to remain free to search across party lines for support. While claiming the

\textsuperscript{42} Rose Scott papers, ML MSS 38/47, List of affiliates and delegates, 1918.
Council was not itself a political organisation, it permitted the affiliation of organisations linked to the political parties. The Australian Women's National League and the Women's Section of the Commonwealth Liberal Party joined the Victorian National Council of Women in 1911 and later the Women's Reform League and the Women's Section of the National Association were accepted as affiliates in NSW. The Women's Section of the Victorian Farmers' Union and the Women's Country Party of NSW were also affiliated in the 1920s. Nonetheless the Council did exclude some organisations. The Victorian Council expelled the Women's Political Association in 1915 on the grounds that its delegate had 'expressed sentiments with which the majority of the Council ... could not in any way agree'⁴³. The Association's delegate, Adela Pankhurst, anti-war organiser and socialist feminist, harangued a meeting on the subject of the war and having refused to accept the ruling of the chair was ejected by the police. The expulsion of the Association was in part an objection to Adela Pankhurst's socialism but it also marked the Council's determination to maintain unity. The applications for affiliation in 1916 from the Women's Peace Army (an offshoot of the Women's Political Association) and the Victorian Socialist Party were likewise rejected. In the same year the Hotel Caterers and Restaurant Female

Operatives Society was refused affiliation on the grounds that as a trade union it could involve the Council in 'political difficulties'.

Women who joined political parties and trade unions did so in the belief that this type of participation increased their political influence. Why then did these women feel the further need to join the National Council of Women? The form which women's party activity took provides some grounds for appreciating this move. Though many women once enfranchised chose to direct their energies towards party-based political activity, the majority did so within the context of separate women's party leagues and auxiliaries. In Victoria the Australian Women's National League had a reputed membership in 1914 of 52,000 and was the largest and most influential of the separate party leagues. Formed in 1904 by members of the Victorian Employers' Federation, within several years it was led by women and had won the right to control its own affairs in such matters as pre-selection. Between 1910 and 1918 the Australian Women's National League successfully resisted several attempts to amalgamate its operation with the


men's leagues. Its affiliation with the National Council of Women in Victoria in 1911 followed closely on the first of these challenges to the League's autonomy.

In NSW the Women's Liberal League, founded in 1902 by Hilma Molyneux Parkes, also fought to preserve its role as a separate party organisation for women. At its height the Women's Liberal League claimed 11,000 members but this figure and the League's influence on the Liberal Party was rapidly reduced with the formation in 1907 of a rival Women's Section within the Liberal and Reform Association. Molyneux Parkes warned that 'women who join men's organizations lose their identity, sacrifice their point of view and instead of helping men ... become the blind tools of Party'. Yet the Women's Section declined to have its identity completely subsumed by the male-dominated party. Women's Section leaders secured the right to form women's branches and to establish a Women's Council to match that of the men, several positions were reserved for women on the central executive and in 1915 'women only' sessions were held during the Liberal Association conference.


47. Cookson, 'Women's Organisations in Politics', p. 102.

When the Liberal Association merged into the National Association in 1917 these features were preserved but women members were distressed to find that not one 'woman's plank' survived the transition from the Liberal to the National Association platform. Disenchanted with the loss of such planks as woman's right to equal pay for equal work the newly formed Women's Section of the National Association immediately affiliated with the National Council of Women.

Party women at times objected to the non-party woman's tendency to 'sink the woman politician in the philanthropist,' but they recognised that issues important to women members, which otherwise would have been left off or relegated to the bottom of the party agenda, could more easily be brought to the attention of the various parties if a wide range of women advocated their resolution. The National Council of Women, a forum which believed women's issues to be of central significance rather than marginal interest, sustained political women of all persuasions.

Several other groups of women in their societies found the National Council of Women approach to be useful. Among the inaugural affiliates of the NSW Council was the Women's Literary Society which first met in 1889 to focus 'the floating feminine intellectuality' of Sydney on matters


of cultural, political and scientific significance. From the 1890s women's reading societies, discussion groups, cultural, intellectual and social clubs and societies proliferated. At the Austral Salon, Warrawee, Lyceum or Alexandra Clubs in Melbourne or at the Queen Victoria and Women's Clubs in Sydney, women whose friendships were normally limited by family acquaintance or domestic circumstance could meet outside the home, exchange ideas and make important contacts. By stimulating discussion and debate these clubs and reading circles encouraged the further establishment of organisations to focus group needs. The initial inspiration for the formation of the National Council of Women came from the Honorary Secretary of the Women's Literary Society, Margaret Windeyer, who attended a World Congress staged by the International Council of Women at the 1893 Chicago World Fair. Other organisations in NSW like the Civic League formed in 1907, the Sydney University Women Graduates Association in 1908 and the Professional Women Workers' Association in 1912, began life as 'circles' within the Women's Club in Sydney and later went on to swell the ranks of the National Council of Women.

The formation of clubs and societies kept pace with


the opening up of educational and employment opportunities for women. Inaugural affiliates of the Victorian Council included the Women's Public Service Association and the Women's Post and Telegraph Association. These associations were joined in 1914 by the Women's Typist and Shorthand Association. By the early 1920s the Councils in both states each incorporated about half a dozen Old Girls' Unions established by the graduates of the leading private girls' high schools. The same schools spawned Headmistresses' Associations and an expanding range of professional associations for general, language and domestic science teachers. In 1921 the Women Assistant Teachers' Association, which represented over six hundred state school teachers, joined the NSW Council. The Women Assistant Teachers' Association's aims of inculcating high ideals of citizenship among members, promoting the general welfare of the profession and gaining equal remuneration for equal work, epitomised the mixed motivations behind the formation of women's professional associations and their subsequent affiliation with the Councils.\textsuperscript{54} Other participating organisations included the Australasian Trained Nurses' Association, the Victorian Medical Women's Society and the broadly-based Professional Women Workers' Association of NSW whose membership covered women from the medical, teaching and nursing professions, the press and the public service. Such groups were formed to regulate and advance

\textsuperscript{54} National Council of Women of NSW, \textit{Biennial Reports, 1921-22}, p. 32.
woman's position in the professions but also 'for the mutual benefit, co-operation and furtherance of work in the interests of women and children'. Whether leisured, married, or professionally employed, educated women were expected to play a positive role in public life. The National Council of Women provided an outlet both for women's community interests and women's professional aspirations.

Some women's associations chose to remain outside the protective embrace of the Council. Women's Central Organising Committees of the Labor Party had been established in NSW in 1904 and in Victoria in 1917. They performed much of Labor's 'political housekeeping', canvassing electorates, enrolling women members, fund-raising for the party and for charity, and organising strike relief. The Labor Women's Committees had the right to send delegates to the Annual Conference but only a handful of women gained positions of prominence on the decision making bodies of the party. To promote their policies and reform demands the Labor Women's Committees forged alliances with non-party organisations like the Woman's Political Association

55. Ibid., p. 31.

56. An earlier Women's Central Organising Committee in Victoria was declared invalid by the Labor Party and disbanded in 1913. ALP Victoria, ALP Women's Central Organising Committee, Souvenir March 1918-March 1938, A Record of Service, Melbourne, 1938, p. 1; Pam Allan, 'A Preliminary Sketch of Women in the NSW Branch of the ALP', B.A. (Hons.), Department of Government, University of Sydney, 1974; Gertrude Melville, 'Fifty Years of the L.W.C.O.C.' in Golden Jubilee: Souvenir of the Labor Women's Central Organising Committee, 1904-54, Sydney, 1954, p. 6.
in NSW. The presence of the non-Labor women's party organisations on the National Council of Women and the fact that conservative party delegates invariably found positions of influence on the executive and standing committees probably influenced the decision of the Labor Women's Committees not to seek Council affiliation. Labor women were further deterred by the Council's equivocal attitude towards strikes and other forms of industrial action.

During the 1917 Great Strike the NSW Council sent a letter of congratulations to the strike-breaking Women's Loyal Service Bureau. Several weeks later, after heated debate, the Council in an unprecedented move voted to donate two guineas towards the Labor Women's Committee for the relief of strikers' families. The Council had only limited funds of its own and relied on the largesse of affiliates in regard to accommodation and office expenses. It was not its normal practice to make donations of any kind\(^{57}\). The Council was often depicted as a conservative even anti-Labor body. This did not prevent individual Labor women like May Mathews the President of the NSW Labor Women's Committee in 1918 from holding a series of positions on the executive committee of the National Council of Women\(^{58}\).

Members of the Labor Women's Committees and women trade unionists also found enough common cause with the National Council in the inter-war period to share public platforms

\(^{57}\) National Council of Women, NSW, Minutes, 6 September 1917; 4 October 1917.

\(^{58}\) Allan, 'Women in the NSW ... ALP', p. 11.
and to co-operate on occasions in delegations mobilised in the interests of women at home and in the paid work-force.

While the focus of this study is the women's organisational network in NSW and Victoria the pattern of interaction between women's groups as outlined above was repeated with only minor variations from state to state. As early as 1909 the existing National Councils of Women in NSW, Victoria, Tasmania (formed in 1899) and Queensland (1905) met irregularly in committee and in conference to co-ordinate the representation of women delegates to overseas conferences of the International Council of Women and to handle correspondence of a national character. Interstate rivalries and personal clashes between state leaders retarded further unification before the war and also perpetuated the confusing way in which each State Council was called a National Council. A Federal Council which drew in the Western Australian and South Australian Councils (formed 1911 and 1920 respectively) was established in 1924 to arrange finance for overseas delegations but each State Council retained its separate affiliation to the International Council of Women. It was not until 1931 that a National Council of Women of Australia was finally voted into existence and became directly affiliated to the International Council. Even then, concern for State autonomy ensured that the Australian Council restricted itself mainly to international questions. 59.

The Council's gradual movement towards a federal structure reflected an awareness of the growing need for a united woman's voice at the national level. It was also a development spurred on by the establishment and growth of a rival network of women's associations. The Perth-based Australian Federation of Women's Societies for Equal Citizenship (later known as the Australian Federation of Women Voters) was formed in 1921 to co-ordinate the lobbying activities of non-party women and to increase their influence on the federal government and at imperial and international forums. The chief instigator and inaugural President was Bessie Rischbieth, a prominent figure in women's reform circles in Western Australia. Under her energetic leadership the Federation expanded until by 1931 it had twelve constituent bodies including the Women's Non-Party Political Association of South Australia, the Women's Service Guild of Western Australia (of which Rischbieth was President), the Feminist Club and United Associations in NSW and the Victorian Women Citizens' Movement. The National Councils of Women mobilised affiliates on the basis that all movements for women and children were progressive and would have the desired effect of raising women's status in the community. The Australian Federation maintained a purposefully selective attitude in its choice of activities and affiliates. Although eager to expand Federation influence, membership was limited to affiliates who worked to promote equality of opportunity, responsibility and reward between men and women.
While the Federation's actual membership remained small in comparison with that of the National Councils, its intense activity and ability to organise a rapid united response allowed it to maintain a level of political visibility which challenged the Councils' primacy. Feelings between the State Councils and the Federation and its affiliates occasionally ran high. In Western Australia in 1923 it was suggested that 'the enmity of the two bodies ... (was) open and unashamed' - a situation fueled by the long-standing feud between Rischbieth and the President of the Council, Edith Cowan. In NSW in the 1930s the United Associations repeatedly challenged the Council's claim to pursue women's rights. Competition between the two networks were also mirrored at the international level. The Federation was the Australian representative of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance a body formed in 1904 by women who broke away from the older International Council of Women. In general, however, relations between the two umbrella groups in Australia was mediated by the fact that some organisations, for example the WCTU of NSW, the Feminist Club and the Victorian Women Citizens' Movement, had affiliate status with both the Australian Federation and the State


National Council of Women. The two networks rarely disagreed on matters pertaining to the legal status of women. They differed only in relation to the breadth of their interests and therefore the strategies they thought appropriate to advance these interests.

While the National Councils of Women never succeeded, for financial reasons, in producing their own magazines, their activities were reported in detail in the publications of their affiliates: in the YWCA's Association Woman, the Women's Reform League's Woman's Voice; the Australian Women's National League's The Woman and in the Housewives' Association magazines including The Progressive Journal and The Housewife, as well as in a range of bulletins and broadsheets produced by smaller member societies. The affiliates of the Australian Federation of Women Voters gave reports of their progress and garnered support through many of the above publications but also through the federation's official newsletter The Dawn. No matter how loosely defined, the existence of lines of communication through a network of National Councils of Women did serve to promote a

64. The Woman, organ of the Australian Women's National League, Melbourne, 1910-34.
surprising continuity in issues discussed and stances taken from state to state in the inter-war years.

**Between the Waves, Between the Wars**

By the early 1920s the composition of interest groups within the National Council of Women was set and would remain little changed into the 1930s. A large number of affiliates were concerned with the health and welfare of women and children. Much of this concern originally focused on members of working-class families but by the 1920s the call for a 'scientific' approach to childcare was being directed to all mothers by a new group of Council affiliates such as the Royal Society for the Welfare of Mothers and Babies and the NSW Government Baby Clinics. The representation of an increasing number of young industrial and commercial workers on the Council by factory girls' clubs and sporting associations ensured that the working conditions of the 'future motherhood of the nation' would be considered alongside the career interests of professional members in such groups as the Women Pharmacists and Social Workers' Associations in NSW and the Business and Professional Women's Club in Melbourne. Some of the women already represented in this range of affiliates also belonged to women's party leagues. In fact a significant number of women prominent in the Council in the inter-war years gained their initial political education as members of, or organisers for, these party associations. The interlocking nature of directorships
between party and non-party, overtly political and
professedly non-political women's associations, meant
executive positions were shared by women who drew on many
perspectives in their choice of goals and strategies.

That these diverse groups could reach a consensus
and act with a united voice as part of the National Councils
of Women demonstrates the extent to which they shared beliefs
about woman's capacities and role. Most of these women
accepted that fundamental 'natural' differences existed
between men and women in terms of character and primary
roles: women were innately gentle and caring, possessors
of a 'mother heart' which enabled them to empathise with
the weak, the dependent and the oppressed. What they sought
was the means to express and fulfil women's special needs
and to make women's influence more widely felt in community
life. New organisations affiliated to the Councils in the
early 1920s attempted to focus this influence even further.
Housewives' Associations mobilised women on the basis
of their roles as domestic labourers and consumers while
the first Country Women's Association [CWA] rapidly proved
its popularity with the wives and mothers of outback
NSW. Dixson has suggested this belief in woman's special
sex-based qualities and in the limited way in which women
could contribute to the community ultimately perpetuated
types of behaviour and perceptions which precluded women's
full entry into the public sphere. Yet the inter-war

67. Dixson, 'Gender, Family and the Women's Movement',
p. 3.
period saw a shift away from women claiming influence
solely for their feminine insight and nurturing qualities.
The educated and professional women drawn to the National
Councils of Women and their affiliates were confident of
their place in the public sphere.

In 1919 the Councils announced their need for
leaders with more time to devote to their duties and a
fuller understanding of local conditions than the vice-
regal ladies who earlier had filled the position of
President. Increasingly the Councils' executive positions
were taken by women who were university educated or who
had family connections with the university or the
professions. Women teachers from schools and universities,
headmistresses, school and factory inspectors, doctors
and public health nurses, directed the strategies and
policies of the standing committees. Professional women
were called upon as lecturers and were appointed as
'special counsellors' to advise the executive on matters
of health, welfare or the law. Rather than seek nomina-
tion as delegates from affiliated societies others joined
the Councils as associate members. These women profoundly
influenced the ideology of the women's movement. Educated
women gave little support to the ideal of the 'instinctive
woman' and proffered instead the model of the woman
'expert'. With her scientifically based knowledge the
woman 'expert' was more readily integrated into public life.

68. For a discussion of these two models in America see
Jill Conway, 'Women Reformers and American Culture,
1870-1930', Journal of Social History, Vol. V, no. 2,
1971-2, pp. 164-77.
Through the National Council of Women different perspectives were pursued and a certain balance achieved. While the Housewives' Association supported the Council's call for equal pay for equal work, the Professional Women Workers' Association furnished 'expert' advice in campaigns to safeguard the health of infants and their mothers. The Council became the focus for a wide range of activities unifying and enhancing women's influence in the community. Women's groups which remained outside the Council participated in meetings and delegations. Divisive issues did arise. In such cases an organisation like the Australian Federation of Women Voters might begin pressure group lobbying while the Council entered lengthy deliberations and referral of key issues to its affiliates. The Federation through its propaganda sharpened the equal rights arguments which already formed one strand in the organised woman's program for change. The existence of networks of women's associations joined loosely at the state, national and international level, not only served to magnify women members' awareness of the manner in which certain issues seemed to cross class and national boundaries, but gave added impetus to the notion that women constituted a special group whose interests transcended divisions of party, class, race and religion.

The issues the women's movement chose to pursue publicly challenged existing notions of political significance. The movement also sought to change the political system by securing public acknowledgement of an interest
that was 'women's interest' and which would be accorded a status at least equal to that of other interest groups such as working men, farmers or manufacturers. The basis for this common interest was not just their shared role as wives and mothers (actual or potential). While women's movement activists were concerned to ensure the health and welfare of the housewife and mother they also saw the need to protect the young working woman from exploitation. For professional women, access to education, equal pay, equal opportunity for promotion and, in some instances, the right of married women to continue their careers, loomed as major issues. Linking these private and public sphere concerns and providing grounds for this contention that women did constitute an interest group, was the understanding that whether working in the factory, office, classroom or laboratory, women were disadvantaged as a group in relation to male workers in the same employment. If labouring at home as housewife or mother their work was unpaid and even its status as 'work' was dubious. As most women had experience of both home and labour force work, even if only in the years before their marriage, the issues raised had at some time affected their lives and thus were interlocking concerns in their discussions. The call for equal rights was not the only manifestation of their feminist consciousness. This awareness surfaced in a more subtle but no less challenging way as women lobbied, for instance, for state services and benefits which they believed would increase woman's economic resources and thus her personal autonomy. On occasions, rather than
wait for state approval and subsidy, they forged ahead to set up their own schemes. Women provided the impetus and labour for the establishment of sex education classes, institutions for 'mental defectives' and epileptics, employment agencies for women workers, co-operative buying ventures and consumer information exchanges, free milk depots, 'Schools for Mothers' and family planning clinics. Organised women's activities in these areas often intersected with those of other interest groups, for example with pronatalists, imperialists and professionals in the field of maternal and infant welfare. While men took part in many of these schemes the initiative of women was of fundamental importance.

Although the economic background of women activists informed their response to various issues, an over-concentration on their class, measured by the position of husband or father, should not be allowed to devalue their aims or discount the radical nature of their commitment and activities. Women were constantly being pulled towards party activity and a party political system which they saw to be polarised along class lines and which seemed primarily concerned with the distribution of power and allocation of resources among men. That perception was sufficient reason for some women to try to maintain their distance from party politics. They reached out across class lines to mobilise women behind campaigns of interest to women as women. In this way they were challenging the distribution of political power even when they failed to avoid conflict between women of different classes.
In the women's movement in the inter-war years we find the participants themselves constrained by language and striving to fill familiar terms with new meanings. Motherhood, for example, was a concept frequently referred to in women's campaigns and it has generally been assumed that its usage indicated acceptance of a domestic ideology which confined women to the home and family. Yet women's calls for 'voluntary motherhood' raised questions about the oppressive nature of male sexuality within marriage. A concern for 'educated motherhood' spawned a range of professional roles for women in relation to the skills which mothers and housewives could acquire, contributing over time to a strengthening of women's case to have their household labours appreciated as 'work'. In an age when businessmen studied efficiency, the appeal to similar principles advanced a case for recognising value in woman's work in the home. At the same time concern for the 'future motherhood of the nation' provided a defence against the exploitation of female labour in factories, shops and offices.

The historical model of feminist activity accepted in Australia to date has implied that after the battle for the suffrage, the apogee of 'First Wave' feminism, there was a decline until the 1970s when the new 'Second Wave' of feminism surged across the political landscape. This thesis sets out to demonstrate that between these 'Waves' and especially in the period between the wars, women's organisational networks, most notably the National Council of Women, its affiliates and allied women's societies,
gave structure and form to a continuing women's movement. The goals they selected for women, in the main, were not couched in terms of equivalence with men but rather in respect of values derived from female experience. Although, with the crisis of the depression years, this particular approach would come under challenge from rival networks of women's organisations, a basic desire to restructure society in line with women's values continued to permeate the activities of the women's movement. The extent to which their strategies and campaigns forced a radical change in the relationship between the public and private, personal and political realms and the significance of their associated attempts to redefine 'politics', the nature of 'women's work' and society's evaluation of that work, has been gravely undervalued. The more recent work of feminist historians seeking to redefine accepted concepts and norms from a female point of view represent part of a continuum of feminist perception which began when the early women's movement first moved to reject definitions and parameters which ignored, downgraded or curtailed women's contributions and endeavours.
... the whole difficulty in the formation of public opinion is solved when we find a way to make people visualize their own personal interest or part in the struggle ...

One need only contemplate one aspect of the Bolshevik system, viz. the nationalisation of women, and here woman's intuition will come to her in summing up and arriving at the final consequence to ensue ...

In 1919, several months after the declaration of peace, the Women's Reform League in Sydney drew the attention of its members to the apparent fulfilment of a prophecy made by the Dean of Durham at the outset of hostilities. The Dean predicted that, in addition to a long-awaited religious revival, the war would bring 'acute social distress caused by economic dislocation', a loosening of the bonds of morality and an opening for political theories of a destructive character. War-time disruptions to trade, rapid inflation and the decline in real wages when combined with the bitterness engendered by the conscription referenda and the 'Great Strike' of 1917, were all factors which contributed to a continuing situation of civil and industrial unrest in the immediate post-war years. For those harbouring fears about the

2. 'Woman's Page', The Fighting Line, April 1919, p. 19.
potentially revolutionary capacity of the workforce the accession to power of the Bolshevik regime in Russia in 1917 provided new grounds for concern. Although peace was celebrated throughout the world the Women's Reform League noted 'a tremor of unrest was threatening to upheave its very foundations'. The Women's Reform League wholeheartedly supported the NSW Nationalist Government in its efforts to re-establish 'law, order, peace and the security of our homes' by the repression of strikers and militant agitators. In the League's estimation the solution to Australia's post-war problems went beyond the need to reimpose work-place discipline or to reaffirm the sanctity of private property. The war had seemingly undermined the moral basis of society. The focus on a 'common danger' - the Bolshevik - provided the context for the fusion, at least for a short time, of 'women's issues' with the class-based politics of the state and employers.

Although avowedly a party political organisation the Women's Reform League was also an integral part of the 'non-party' women's movement in NSW. In common with


6. The Women's Reform League was formerly the Women's Liberal League. The title was changed mid-1916. See The Fighting Line, August 1916, p. 19.

other affiliated societies of the National Council of Women, the League exhibited a deep-seated concern about the social aspects of war-time dislocation. The separation of sons, husbands and fathers from their families, the problems of sickness and injury in those surviving and the widespread incidence of venereal disease threw 'a sinister, disturbing influence even on the fundamental moral relationship'.

The war intensified long-standing fears about the future of the family and the quality of the race and also raised the spectre of a 'rising tide of immorality'. The implementation of an equal but elevated moral standard for the sexes and the augmentation of a stronger influence and custodial role for women seemed essential.

From the outset of hostilities the League indicated its solid support for the war effort by mobilising a volunteer army of women to aid in recruitment drives, fund-raising exercises and the pro-conscription campaign. At the same time, in co-operation with women's social purity and temperance organisations, the League lobbied for the introduction of early closing of hotels, the abolition of 'shouting' and the establishment of 'dry' army canteens to ensure the well-being and efficiency of the soldier, training or repatriated. A darker, seldom articulated suspicion imbued the campaigns to control soldier drinking. Alcohol

8. Ibid., August 1919, p. 2.

9. For further details of the women's war-time temperance crusades see Smart, 'The Panacea of Prohibition'.
was considered the 'enemy of continence': it stimulated sexual appetites, weakened will-power and ultimately destroyed the 'moral sense'. The success of the early closing referendum which followed the Casula-Liverpool soldier riots encouraged women to widen their efforts to protect female virtue from the encroachments of the rapacious male.

With the men away the predominantly young and unmarried woman worker became an object of conspicuous interest to women reformers and to civil and military authorities. In Sydney the National Council of Women arranged for the posting of notices at railway stations and shipping wharves to direct young women to agencies which would advise on 'safe' accommodation and employment. Fearing 'white-slavers' the National Council of Women sought tighter controls of unlicensed registry offices. The Women's Reform League, the Women's Central Organising Committee of the Labor Party, the Women Workers' Union, the Feminist Club and the Child Study Association joined in petitioning the NSW Government to establish women's patrols of parks and railway stations. In 1916 the


11. National Council of Women, NSW, Minutes, 6 December 1917.

12. Ibid., Executive Minutes, 31 May 1917.

National Council of Women of Victoria commented with some uneasiness on the rising numbers of 'seemingly respectable' young women to be seen alone in the street at night. The Council sought the appointment of women police officers on the ground that effective protection of 'girls from the menace of city life in given conditions' called for the active involvement of women. New industrial conditions caused by the war were forcing women from the security of their homes 'into what was formerly men's work, with temptations, increased liberty, and dangerous surroundings'. Cecilia Downing, President of the WCTU, said police women should 'advise girls who were not inherently bad, but thoughtless and beyond parental control' and restrain them from 'potential evil'.

The women's movement had long sought the appointment of women police officers. In 1915 Lillian Armfield and Maude Marion Rhodes were appointed police officers in Sydney. As a result of pressure on the Victorian

15. Argus, 1 June 1916, p. 6.
16. Ibid.
Government from women's organisations similar appointments were made in Melbourne in 1917. The duties allocated to women police officers were extensive, covering a range of services from the prevention of child truancy to the control of traffic but to women reformers the female police officer was primarily a means to protect young women and more importantly control adolescent female sexuality: they were to keep girls off the streets at night, watch railway stations and wharves and keep brothels and saloons under surveillance in order to prevent the entrapment of young women into prostitution. Generally, women police officers observed the behaviour of young women in public parks and whilst leaving their places of employment in the evenings.

The extent to which this control should be extended to protect the community and the degree to which the state, rather than women professionals and welfare workers, should identify and control young women 'at risk' became one of a number of issues raised by the introduction of legislation to control venereal disease during the war years.

War-time enquiries into the incidence of venereal disease alarmed military and civilian authorities. Between 1915 and 1920 all States introduced legislation to make venereal disease notifiable and treatment by a medical practitioner compulsory. In 1915 Western Australia

18. Argus, 1 August 1917, p. 6.
passed the Health Amendment Act in anticipation of the influx of venereal disease accompanying the repatriated troops. In 1916 the Commonwealth offered subsidies to the other states to pass similar venereal disease legislation\textsuperscript{21}. In Victoria Vida Goldstein's Women's Political Association opposed these measures\textsuperscript{22}. In NSW the Women's Reform League also launched a campaign in opposition to the introduction of 'contagious disease' legislation. While the Victorian opposition was 'non-party' and the Reform League was an avowed supporter of the Liberal Association both were affiliated to the British Dominions Woman's Suffrage League, a body formed by Vida Goldstein on a visit to London in 1913 to monitor and make applications to the imperial authorities on behalf of women\textsuperscript{23}. The Women's Reform League and the Women's Political Association maintained an implacable opposition to contagious disease legislation, invoking the 'glorious campaigns of Josephine Butler' against the 'two pillars' of 'state regulation of vice: compulsory examination and compulsory detention'\textsuperscript{24}.


\textsuperscript{23} Cookson, 'Women's Organisations in Politics', pp. 31-2.

\textsuperscript{24} The Woman's Voice, August 1916, p. 3.
In contrast, the National Councils of Women in these States followed the lead set by the Western Australian Council and lent their cautious support to measures they hoped would eradicate disease in both sexes.²⁵

The NSW and Victorian legislation eventually introduced in this area was purportedly applied to men and women and as such was approved by the National Councils of Women. Of the women's organisations' concern for equal moral standards Vida Goldstein commented bitterly that 'the doctors and politicians recognize ... and play up to it by sugar coating every "health pill" with the sweet word "equality" - but the pills are only given to women!'²⁶

The administration of the NSW and Victorian laws was never equal. By 1922 the Women's Reform League and the WCTU in NSW and Victoria had joined the new Perth-based Australian Federation of Women's Societies for Equal Citizenship, which was formed after the split over contagious disease legislation in the Western Australian women's movement.²⁷ The co-operation of these organisations ensured that information concerning the operation of legislation was widely distributed. The addition of an 'informant's clause' to the Western Australian Act in 1918 was closely monitored by the Federation of Women's Societies for Equal Citizenship. Mrs Jamieson Williams, a Vice-President

²⁵ Norris, Champions of the Impossible, pp. 35-7.


of the Australian Federation and a prominent member of the WCTU, reported to the 'Social Problem Circle' of the Women's Reform League in Sydney that out of forty cases detained under the clause only one man had been charged and 15 per cent of the women forcibly examined were 'innocent'.

While the National Councils of Women and the affiliates of the Australian Federation disagreed over the exact implications of the contagious diseases legislation, women within both groups identified strongly not only with 'innocent' women who were stigmatised by the operation of the acts but with the fate of women designated as 'common prostitutes'. Angela Booth, an executive member of the Victorian National Council of Women, was outspoken in condemnation of the victimisation of prostitutes and extended her criticism to the men who used prostitutes:

Countless innocent women have been sacrificed to the so-called needs of men in the traffic of prostitution...
Caught early, seduced, infected; taken by the police, registered, and so branded for life: - The transgressor free: the victim punished.

The alternative of distributing prophylactics to soldiers on leave met strong opposition from women's organisations. In 1919 the National Council of Women in NSW, at the instigation of the Women's Reform League, cabled a resolution to


the Queen deploring the practice. The Council's solution was to 'appeal to the sense of duty, patriotism and chivalry which exists even in the weakest'. In Melbourne, Angela Booth directly challenged the support for prophylaxis. Such measures, she protested, encouraged youths to adventure the first sexual contact, giving them a taste for 'irregularity' which made 'fidelity in marriage difficult'. Earlier, at a conference on sex hygiene sponsored by the Workers' Educational Association in Sydney, Booth argued that the answer to the 'Social Evil' lay not in the regulation or curtailment of the 'supply' but in counteracting the 'demand' for prostitution. The demand was neither natural nor irrepressible, she said, and could be controlled by educating young people. Dr Grace Boelke who attended the conference as convenor of the Public Hygiene Standing Committee of the National Council of Women later reported to Council on the difficulties Booth and other women delegates had convincing the male delegates that it was not only possible but desirable that men should practise continence and self-control in the matter of sexual encounters.

32. Booth, Venereal Disease, pp. 7-8.
33. Coward, 'Impact of War on NSW', p. 335; WEA, Conference on Sex Hygiene, 1917.
34. Booth, 'Prostitution', p. 15.
Although differences of opinion existed in relation to the introduction of venereal disease legislation, women's organisations agreed on the efficacy of long-term educative solutions to encourage an equal and elevated standard of morality. Their efforts represent part of a continuum begun with the suffragists who advocated votes for women in order to guard the home and family against moral dangers. Support for measures such as the raising of the age of consent stemmed from a realisation that the law institutionalised a double standard of morality that tended to protect the male aggressor rather than the female victim. The war years compounded women's movement fears about the sexual exploitation of women and the precarious situation for women living outside the protective confines of the family. In the post-war period women's organisations tried to alert all women to the prevailing sexual threat. Their anger and unease at the debilitating impact of the moral double standard combined with a class-based political campaign to undermine the influence of anti-capitalist philosophies on the Australian worker.

The anti-Bolshevik campaign launched in this period aimed to counteract the cautious support for the Russian Revolution which existed within the Australian Labor movement\textsuperscript{36}. The campaign sought to affirm private ownership of productive property as the cornerstone of

democracy and civilization itself and to impose the discipline necessary for a return to industrial stability. The campaign presented capitalism as an orderly and just system. Bolshevism was associated with the disorder and destruction unleashed by the war. The predominance of the colour red in the Bolshevik flag was utilised to link Bolshevik philosophy and action with the 'madness' which overtook a world at war. Red was the 'danger colour', the colour of 'mental excitement and unrest'. Bolshevism was an 'epidemic or plague' and as such was equated with other natural disasters like the 'Red Plague' of venereal disease and the influenza pandemic of 1919.

The new family code in the USSR was portrayed as undermining the legal and religious basis of marriage by removing restrictions on divorce. The revolutionary potential of the Bolshevist's efforts to redefine the relationship between women, the family and society was appreciated in a distorted form in Australia. The Woman's Voice

38. Argus, April 5 1919, p. 18.
explained 'not only is Capital thrown overboard, but religion, marriage, the family and respect for women'. The 'fruits of Bolshevism', the 'Women's Page' of the Australian National Review exclaimed, would be 'the abolition of the private possession of women'. Woman's Voice expanded on this warning:

This means no more family life, no more faithful and loving wedlock, but that women shall be the common property of the whole nation.

During the war the symbolic figure of the ravished woman had been used to great effect to mobilise the nation against the 'Bestial Boche'. The image was used in recruiting propaganda and in maintaining support for the war effort. Annie Sulman, a Vice-President of the Women's Reform League, identified Australia with:

Homes untouched by loot, or rapine,
Unmolested age and youth
Children whom no hand hath tortured,
Faith still kept in God, and truth.

The symbolic use of rape in much of the propaganda, equating the ravishment of women by enemy soldiers with an image of the nation invaded by the enemy, could only intensify women's feelings of sexual vulnerability. The press

40. The Woman's Voice, June 1919, p. 3.
41. The Australian National Review, August 22 1921, p. 6.
42. The Woman's Voice, December 1919, p. 4.
accounts of German atrocities at Lille in France where young women were taken from their families without warning, herded together 'indiscriminately' and given an 'intimate examination' by doctors, before being transported for slave labour, consolidated opinion about 'Bosche' brutality. The subtle invocation of imagery familiar to women who opposed the introduction of contagious diseases legislation made this propaganda more believable and more horrifying in its implications. Opponents of conscription drew on such fears: the Women's Peace Army alleged conscription would spread venereal disease and legislation to control it would enslave and exploit all women. The supporters of the early closing campaigns also drew on the fears of rampant male sexuality. Mrs Harrison Lee Cowie called on the electorate in 1916 to vote for 6 o'clock closing because,

> Woman has the right to protect her home - her little kingdom. Sometimes the little kingdom has been, like Belgium, unable to protect itself against the enemy, but, as the British went to the rescue of little Belgium, we all plead for every man to come to the rescue and vote 6 o'clock.

The lessons of war-time propaganda were applied in the anti-Bolshevik campaign. Women, while the 'tools and objects' of the campaign, also tried to turn the campaign's message to their own uses. Using this propaganda to dramatise a concern about the treatment of women by male Bolsheviks they publicised their own concern to raise the

45. e.g. the resolution from the Women's Reform League in *The Woman's Voice*, August 1917, p. 2.
status of women on the basis of their roles as wives and mothers. They encouraged other women to visualise the problems of post-war reconstruction and industrial unrest in terms of the future of their homes and domestic role, a future which Bolshevism would destroy. Their campaign pointed also to the threatening capacity of the sexually rapacious male in general.

The Australian Women's National League in Victoria, the Women's Reform League and the Women's Section of the National Association emerged as the most vociferous opponents of Bolshevism. Unlike their male counterparts the party women's network did not fold between elections. In 1920 the Australian Women's National League laid claim to over 400 branches in Victoria. While some of these branches were possibly defunct, the balance between branches in abeyance and new branches was maintained by the League's staff of two organisers, eight field officers, an office of five and many Honorary Speakers. The Women's Reform League was a much smaller organisation claiming no more than 20 branches in 1919. Its lone staff member Emily Bennett

49. The Woman, February 1920, pp. 506-08 published a full list of branches and their officials. Without access to the official records of the League it is difficult to estimate the actual number of active branches at any one time. A survey of the branch reports submitted to The Woman across the 1920s indicates that over 300 different branches sent in reports on a bi-annual or at least annual basis. Of this number approximately 60 branches sent in regular monthly reports.

50. The Woman, October 1920, p. 277.

was hard pressed to maintain branch numbers in the face of the inroads on membership after the National Association set up branches and the CWA was established. Nonetheless, the League had strong non-party connections. In 1918 it was represented on the National Council of Women, the Health Federation, the Red Cross Society, the Professional Women Workers' Association, the Bush Book Club, the Victoria League, the District Nursing Association, the League of Honour, the Mothers' Union, the Fresh Air League and the WCTU. It published the Woman's Voice which was a much used forum for these organisations. Its intra-party rival, the Women's Section of the National Association, was also led by women who had strong connections with the non-party women's movement and was affiliated to the National Council of Women. The Women's Section joined the anti-Bolshevik campaign through the 'Women's Pages' of the Fighting Line. Reports of the Bolshevik plans to 'nationalise' women, to make 'free love' compulsory, to abolish marriage or to force women into marriage, were featured in the speeches and publications of these women's leagues. That such stories were passed on by Czarist refugees or by members of the Allied army fighting the Bolsheviks in Russia and were often coloured and contradictory, did not prevent their continued dissemination. To 'show what Bolshevism in Russia means to women' Woman's Voice reported in 1919 that,

52. Ibid., October 1918, p. 2.
A girl having reached her eighteenth year is to be announced as the property of the State ... (she is) obliged, subject to most severe penalty to register at the Bureau of Free Love in the Commissariat of Surveillance ... men between the ages of 19 and 50 have the right to choose from among the registered women even without the consent of the latter, in the interests of the State. Children who are the issue of these unions are to become the property of the State.53

Through this propaganda an image of the loss of autonomy and sexual abuse of women was built up. The Women's Reform League claimed the operation of the 'Bureau of Free Love' made 'all women over the age of 18 public property and open for selection by men without the right of refusal'54. The emphasis was on the idea that women had 'become the property of the State, to be dealt with as cattle "rounded up" for selection at a Government compound.55.

Lurid pictures were painted of the staffing of the 'Bureau of Free Love' by the daughters of the upper classes for the pleasure of the lowest social elements. The violation of women supposedly in the interests of class equality served as an appeal to men and women across class:

In compliance with the decision of the Kronstadt Soviet, the private possession of women is abolished. The social inequalities and legitimate marriages of the past have served as instruments whereby all the most beautiful women have become the property of the bourgeoisie ... they are proclaimed the property of the whole nation.56

53. The Woman's Voice, February 1919, p. 3.
55. Ibid., 21 February 1919, p. 17, p. 19.
56. Ibid., p. 11.
Designating women as the 'property of the whole nation' meant one thing. Less anyone should miss the point the propaganda expanded on the details of the sexual enslavement of Bolshevik women. The Bolsheviks had decreed that men could 'visit' women no more than three times a week, Fighting Line reported. Men

... wishing to use "a piece of public property" must show a certificate proving they are working-class citizens. Other male members of the community can obtain equal rights to those of the proletariat by the payment of £10 monthly into the public fund.57

Thus the economic transaction was laid bare; the new arrangements were revealed as state regulated prostitution. Under the Bolsheviks the romance and ritual of love and courtship was stripped away. Marriage would be degraded and families broken up. Women would be left without status or influence.

In confronting the question of sexuality women reformers increasingly drew on science to support their arguments. In particular they looked to eugenics. Eugenic theory strengthened a range of demands previously couched in 'moral' or 'social purity' terms. A recurrent theme in eugenics was the necessity to encourage the individuals to promote the future of the race by exercising sexual restraint. The linking of venereal disease to promiscuity and the impact of disease on the 'racial fibre' was a powerful argument for the control not only

57. Ibid.
of female but of male sexuality. Angela Booth pointed out that although 'it used to be held that continence was injurious to the male ... the progress of medical science had reversed that opinion and we know ... that ... so far from being injurious, (it) is highly desirable from every point of view'\(^{58}\). A dire future was forecast for the man who engaged in sexual activity at too early an age when damage might be done to the 'nerve-balance', bone structure and 'moral sense':

The offspring of men whose physical and mental growth is thus stunted go to swell the list of the inefficient. These men are the propagators of the great mass of unintelligent human beings.\(^{59}\)

The respectable and racially responsible imprimatur of eugenic theory also added weight to women reformers' appeals for sexual restraint in marriage. While the women's movement did not publicly support the use of contraceptives or abortion as methods for restricting family size they did insist on the right of women to choose motherhood when conditions were favourable to the woman and to her family. The eugenic demand for 'quality' rather than 'quantity' of population provided an important 'scientific' context for this demand. The absence of safe, effective contraception meant that periodic or permanent abstention from intercourse was the only reliable means of fertility control. The widespread acceptance of the idea that woman,

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59. Ibid.
by nature or conditioning, possessed a superior moral character meant that her ability to practise sexual continence was not at issue. Convincing men to practise self control in single life and later within marriage and to recognise the wife's right to refuse her husband's sexual demands were the desired goals.

The long-term campaign in England and Australia to oppose the introduction of contagious disease legislation and the state regulation of prostitution left a permanent imprint on the women's movement here, ingraining the theme of sexual wrongs perpetrated against women by men. In the post-war period the women's movement continued its efforts to highlight the double moral standard which made male sexuality so threatening and oppressive to women. Their campaigns presented sex, somehow transformed into something disagreeable and often violent, reaching its apogee in Russia in the radical nature of the Bolshevik assault on women. The loss of autonomy and the sexual abuse of the Russian woman by the Bolsheviks provided a set of images to dramatise the extent of male carnality and opened the way for the application of women's solutions. The female supporters of the anti-Bolshevik campaign wished to impress on the minds of their readers that with the undermining of woman's status as the morally superior being and the separation of the woman from the protective confines of the family, she would be fully exposed to the sexual exploitation of men and subject to ruin.
The 1920s saw much debate on the vice and virtue of the 'Modern Woman': her drinking and smoking, her penchant for 'excessive dancing and amusement' and her attire - the 'too-short skirt and the excessively low neck'\(^{60}\). Women police officers were urged to escort 'foolish girls, who are jeopardising their honour, home to their people'\(^{61}\). These officers, in turn, sought the assistance of women's organisations. Maude Rhodes addressed the National Council of Women of NSW on the further efforts needed to educate young women in their duty. Rhodes recommended the appointment of women welfare officers in factories and business houses and the provision of properly supervised hostels and clubs\(^{62}\). Women reformers perceived the need to mould the moral character of young women to ensure they observed correct standards to which men could aspire. That perception encouraged the caretaker roles created for educated women as police and probationary officers and as welfare workers and advisers in hostels, girls' clubs, industry and business.

The women's movement supported a range of activities directed at providing sex instruction. In NSW a Social Hygiene Society met in the Women's Reform League office and trained speakers to address other groups such

\(^{60}\) See The Woman, November 1923, p. 265; 'Women's Page', The Australian National Review, September 1921, pp. 30-31; The Woman's Voice, June 1922, p. 11.

\(^{61}\) Mothers in Australia, organ of the Mothers' Union in Australasia, September 1918, p. 7.

\(^{62}\) National Council of Women, NSW, Executive Minutes, 21 August 1919.
as Parents and Citizens' Associations. In Victoria a similar training scheme was mounted under the leadership of Dr Georgina Sweet and Ada a'Beckett, lecturers in biology at the Melbourne University. Sweet and a'Beckett offered training courses on sex hygiene for a fee of 10/6. The YWCA was also active in the area of sex hygiene. With the backing of the National Council of Women the Victorian YWCA launched a series of lectures on sex hygiene principles in 1922. The YWCA reported one lecture by Dr Flora Innes in which

... was revealed mystery after mystery in which our own bodies are enveloped, and the great truth about life was unfolded in a wonderful way. Then came the meaning of it all, in which we were further privileged to soar in the still more mystical regions beyond, better equipped and inspired to answer the challenge of the Christian ideal of womanhood.

Rhetoric aside, the main aim of the dissemination of sex education in this way was to show girls 'how to be good' and to encourage them 'to make the men different ... and raise a high standard for the boys'.

The assertion of woman's superior moral sense and the need to guard this gift from the inroads of modern conditions did not entail a rejection of the sexual nature of women. At the 1916 Sydney conference on the teaching of sex hygiene a number of women, including Angela Booth

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and Dr Grace Boelke, were at pains to establish that women were equally as sexual as men. A male delegate's statement that 'man is always a man, but a girl must be kissed into being a woman' provoked a stinging attack on the depiction of female sexuality by male medical 'experts'. How, Angela Booth asked, did men get their knowledge of woman's 'sex anaesthesia'. For generations woman had been told 'if she was not without sex feeling she had to pretend that she was'. It was highly unlikely that 'nature, which planned woman to be the mother of the race, left her deficient in the sex equipment'. Booth added pointedly that such masculine assumptions lay at the 'very root of the double standard of morality'\(^{67}\). Dr Grace Boelke who worked as a Medical Inspector in the NSW Department of Public Instruction observed that the 'teaching that girls were devoid of sexual impulse ... resulted in a very great deal of physical and mental suffering'\(^{68}\).

Women's sexuality posed real problems for women reformers. The Organising Secretary of the Women's Reform League, Laura Bogue Luffman, noted that the young girl now needed protection not only from the 'outside world' but also from her 'own unreasoning passion'\(^{69}\). Where previously 'many young women were kept straight by the fear that a lapse from morality might be followed by an increase in the population', the increased access to

\(^{67}\) Booth, 'Prostitution', pp. 86-87.

\(^{68}\) Ibid., p. 87.

\(^{69}\) Laura Bogue Luffman, 'In Place of the Public House', The Woman's Voice, November 1916, p. 7.
contraceptive devices had tempted a 'large number' to 'subordinate discretion to desire'\textsuperscript{70}. The women's movement sought to legitimise its demands for male self-control and continence on the basis of woman's higher standard of morality. The movement adopted the role of moral guardian to keep marriage and the procreative framework as the proper context for sexual activity. It could not condone the sexually active young woman who had

\[ \ldots \text{absorbed all that is worst in socialistic dogma and profess and practically carry out the principle of 'free love'.}\textsuperscript{71} \]

Women reformers feared that breaking the link between sexuality and reproduction through the use of contraception would render all women prostitutes, no longer evaluated on the basis of their work as mothers and moral guardians. Women would be left with only their sex to sell.

In their depiction of the Bolshevik regime the women who spearheaded the anti-Bolshevik campaign sought to do more than defend private property. Their circulated propaganda became an important channel for women's organisations to highlight their own private concerns. Women associated the carnality of Bolshevik males with

\begin{itemize}
    \item \textsuperscript{70} Edward Beadon Turner, 'Is it Reasonable to Expect the Same Moral Standard from Men as from Women?', \textit{The Woman's Voice}, November 1920, p. 7.
    \item \textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
the sexual excesses of men in and out of marriage and
provided a lesson to loving husbands and single men to
exercise restraint. The profligacy of Bolshevik men
confirmed by comparison the superior moral sense of
women. If the women of Australia allowed their superiority
to be eroded, whether by undermining their family role or
by the acceptance of 'free love', they would experience
the same degradation and ruin as Russian women.

The emphasis on sexual restraint served women's
interests in a society where women more often than not were
blamed for sexual crimes committed against them by men.
An insistence on the right of wives and mothers to refuse
their husband's sexual demands went some way to laying
the foundations of a new egalitarian code of marital rela-
tions. The assertion of a 'mother's right' to protect her
own and other women's daughters from sexual exploitation
also provided a basis for extending women's influence in
the wider community. The employment of educated women
as sex hygiene instructors, police and probation
officers and welfare workers in factories and shops pro-
vided 'full scope for womanly qualities of kindness,
tact, intuition, and all that we understand by
"motherliness"';72. The price paid was the continued con-
finement of 'regular' female sexuality to a procreative
framework. In their guise as voluntary or professional
welfare workers educated women policed other women's
morals to ensure adherance to a 'proper' and 'decent'
model of behaviour.

72. Mothers in Australia, September 1918, p. 7.
Although the women's movement co-opted aspects of eugenic arguments and anti-Bolshevik propaganda in an attempt to set standards of sexual conduct ultimately it could not exercise sufficient influence to enforce its preferred model on either men or women. During the anti-Bolshevik campaign organised women aroused female anger at male sexual exploitation yet this potential force was subverted into a repressive campaign against sexuality in general and women members were led into campaigns controlled by men whose goals were antithetical to the values and ideals of the women's movement. While encouraging female conformity to traditional models of chastity, the image of the sexually unrestrained Bolshevik male linked the concerns of women reformers to those of male property owners who were fearful of the restlessness of the Australian worker. The dominant ideologies which emerged in the post-war period were those geared towards the integration of a social order threatened by anti-capitalist philosophies and industrial militancy. The feminist concern about the double standard of morality was to lead many women into the anti-Bolshevik camp. The final effect was to tie their efforts to class-based politics and to begin the erosion of the 'class-less', 'non-party' ethos which existed in the women's movement.
CHAPTER THREE
WORKING 'GIRLS' AND PROFESSIONAL 'LADIES'

... we hope that before long ... business firms will realize the importance of welfare work, not only as something that will rebound to the success and credit of the business firm, but as something that is going to be a tremendously important factor in the development physically, educationally and morally of our girl workers.¹

In 1918 the NSW Board of Trade sat for the first time to determine a 'living wage' for adult female workers. Commonwealth and State arbitration tribunals had already accepted the principle that the male 'living wage' should be a 'family wage' capable of supporting a male breadwinner, his wife and children. In fixing a corresponding 'living wage' for women workers in NSW, Judge Heydon decided that the court could not consider the female worker who had any greater responsibility than that of supporting herself. He fixed the female wage as a single rate at 30/- per week, fifty percent of the male 'living wage' fixed four months earlier².

The Board met again in 1919 to inquire into female wages assisted by an advisory committee whose members included Belle Golding, factory inspector, Kate Dwyer of the Women Workers' Union and Imelda Cashman of the Printing


Trades Union. Several women's organisations including the YWCA and the Women's Service Club presented evidence and Dr Grace Boelke submitted a report on behalf of the National Council of Women. Boelke had been a member of the Womanhood Suffrage League and the Women's Progressive Association and helped to establish the Professional Women Workers' Association in 1910. She was a staunch advocate of wage justice for women workers claiming that if 'women were given fair opportunity they could fill all positions equally with men and should receive equal remuneration'. In 1919 Boelke remained a vocal opponent of the 'exploitation of women' and their 'relegation to junior and less salaried positions'.

Before the Board Boelke chose to deal with the health and protection of women workers rather than argue the case for wage justice. Her recommendation for the establishment of working women's hostels to provide safe

3. NSW Board of Trade Inquiry into the Cost of Living of Adult Female Employees, Minutes, 1919, Vol. II, p. 574, NSWSA 2/5770.
4. Ibid., p. 444.
5. Address to Womanhood Suffrage League by Dr Grace Boelke, quoted in Julie Atkinson, 'Aspects of the Developing Political Relationship Between Working Class Women and Feminists, 1890-1917', B.A. (Hons.), History, University of Sydney, 1979, p. 43.
7. The NSWSA holds only Volume II of the Minutes of Evidence of the Inquiry. Although a transcript of Boelke's report to the Board is not available the tenor of her recommendations can be discerned from evidence given later in the inquiry.
accommodation, supervised companionship and prepared meals⁸ was fully endorsed by Dr Richard Arthur, the Nationalist Member for Middle Harbour and well known eugenicist. In dealing with the question of women's wages he said it had to be remembered that women workers were 'in a very considerable proportion, the mothers ... of the future'.⁹ The health and morality of young women workers remained an important framework of reference for the National Councils of Women. When Eleanor Hinder, an executive member of the NSW Council, drew the Council's attention to the reduction in the female minimum wage in 1922 the Council responded in terms of female virtue: in order 'to safeguard the moral and spiritual issues in the lives of women' the basic wage should not fall below £2/1/- per week¹⁰. For the most part these women accepted the idea of the family wage for men although some gave unqualified support for equal pay. Angela Booth was an equal pay supporter who also pleaded a case in terms of sexual morality arguing that the 'right payment ... of women's work is important on many counts, but on none is it of wider importance than in its relation to prostitution, for it is unquestionable that where women's wages rise prostitution decreases'¹¹.

⁸ NSW Board of Trade Inquiry, Minutes, 1919, p. 664.
⁹ Ibid., p. 446, p. 449.
¹⁰ National Council of Women, NSW, General Minutes, 27 July 1922.
There was some ambivalence in the attitude of women reformers to the level of women's wages. The majority continued to press for better wages for women even while arguing their case in terms of protecting the nation's future mothers. With no real prospect of significant improvement in wages, women concerned about women workers came to direct their efforts to income supplement benefits such as low cost accommodation and recreational facilities. The 'girl workers' aged between fourteen and twenty-one and employed in increasing numbers in factories, shops and offices became their special interest. In championing the cause of 'girl workers' the women's movement successfully promoted new caretaker roles for educated women.

'To make a girl good ...'

The time has gone when it was possible to build a barricade around our girls for their protection ... What we must do is to go with the girl into the new world which is opening out for her, help her to realise her responsibilities, and help her to build up a protection from within. 12

In 1919 the YWCA, with the support of a number of socially prominent citizens including Lady Munro Ferguson, launched a 'Girls' Week' in Sydney to raise £50,000 for a new building. The plans provided for

12. Jean Stevenson, National Industrial Secretary of the YWCA, SMH, 12 September 1919, p. 5.
offices, a restaurant, a gymnasium, swimming pool and accommodation for thirty 'girl transients'. In both NSW and Victoria the YWCA was prominent in the provision of welfare services of this kind. Founded in England in 1855 and introduced to the colonies in the 1880s, the Association was an early and active affiliate of the National Council of Women. While initially aimed at providing a religious influence for young women workers in the city, in the 1920s the Association's 'practical Christianity' encompassed the material and spiritual needs of its members. Although Protestant-based the Association was 'open to all women and girls, irrespective of class or creed, a good moral character being the one requirement'. Membership cost 2/6 per annum for women under twenty years of age and 5/- for others. The paid-up membership of 1,700 in Victoria and 1,500 in NSW in 1919 does not reflect the extent of the YWCA's influence. Membership was not a prerequisite for those wishing to avail themselves of the hostels, clubs, cafeterias and recreational activities available.

By 1921 the Association maintained several hostels in Sydney and Melbourne. The hostels were

16. Ibid.
self-supporting. Residents at the Castlereagh Street hostel in Sydney in 1919 paid 19/6 a week for full board sharing a room and up to 25/- a week for a single room. The Kirribilli hostel catered mainly for longer-term boarders, many of whom were young women from the country studying at business college or tertiary institutions. Another hostel operated at Waverley. In 1919-20 the Sydney Association provided temporary or permanent accommodation for 2,162 women. These numbers suggest the YWCA supplied a much needed service. Hostel supervisors were advised to steer a mid-course between 'old-fashioned rules and quiet order and discipline'. Although some measure of privacy was suggested as essential for residents it was still expected that the supervisor would have the 'responsibility of guiding the formation of friendships'. The Association's Housing Bureau offered advice to young women seeking accommodation. A YWCA Secretary reported to the Board of Trade in 1919 that she directed young women to areas such as North Sydney, Potts Point and Darlinghurst avoiding Redfern, Surry Hills or Waterloo as 'you have to be very careful when you send girls into these localities'. Trains and ships were met

19. NSW Board of Trade Inquiry, Minutes, 1919, p. 502.
20. YWCA Sydney, Annual Report 1919-20, p. 11. See also 1920-21, pp. 9-12.
22. Ibid.
23. NSW Board of Trade Inquiry, Minutes, 1919, p. 509.
and women travellers were advised about employment and accommodation while 'runaway girls' were counselled to return home. This vigilance work placed a considerable strain on Association staff and was later taken over by a separate Traveller's Aid Society formed with the help of the Young Men's Christian Association, the National Council of Women and the Salvation Army.  

The YWCA viewed its work as representative of a change in the direction of voluntary welfare work. It was 'preventive' rather than 'rescue' work. In 1922, Jean Stevenson, the National Industrial Secretary commented on the 'irregularity in the morals of to-day' and the 'lack of restraint ... most manifest in young people'. The welfare worker, Stevenson claimed, did not have to go far to find the root cause for in many cases 'parental authority and discipline' was sadly lacking. To combat this parental neglect and to counteract other negative influences on young women workers, the Association stepped up its provision of clubs, classes and organised amusements. The Association claimed its clubs were the product of 'scientific' study of the 'needs of the adolescent girl' while she passed through 'what is acknowledged to be the most difficult years of her life'.

27. Press cutting dated 10 June 1921 in University of Sydney Settlement Records, S.32, University of Sydney Archives.
Adolescence, which the Association characterised as the stage between the ages of fourteen and twenty, was widely acknowledged by its staff to be not only 'a golden age of adult influence' but also a period 'so fraught with danger and so filled with opportunity that it is rightly considered life's crisis'\(^{28}\). On one hand volatile and at risk, on the other hand malleable, the adolescent 'girl' was a central figure in their planning.

In planning their recreation programme the Association set out in particular to combat community feeling which held that 'girls who worked in the city for a living should get all the recreation they needed at home with the help of a little sewing and light household duties'\(^{29}\). As an alternative it offered a variety of amusements and classes for women workers within clubs organised by occupation and age. Girls at school were catered for by the Girl Citizens' Movement\(^{30}\). Blue Triangle Clubs were formed to provide for the cities' legion of office workers and sales girls. For industrial workers there were clubs in factories such as the Cygnet Club at the Signet Sweet Factory\(^{31}\). These clubs offered organised entertainments such as dances and tea parties.

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29. SMH, 28 October 1919, p. 6.


held under the watchful eye of the Association Secretary, classes in drama, physical culture, millinery, first aid, elocution and French, and special interest groups such as Bible circles and the Highbrow Club where members discussed books and subjects of 'educational and inspirational character'.

The Association believed that 'to make a girl good you must make her healthy and happy'. The 'joy of motion which is inherent in all young things and which so often leads girls to dancing saloons' could be counteracted by the physical culture class. In addition to gym classes, picnics and boating expeditions were organised, as were 'bush rambles' and tennis and hockey clubs. In conjunction with women welfare supervisors in city stores in Sydney the Association formed the City Girls' Amateur Sports Association in 1924. Over seven hundred young women enrolled in its 'Learn to Swim Week' in the first year. From 1922 the YWCA added a lecture series on 'sex hygiene principles' to its curriculum. Dr Flora Innes, the lecturer, advised a group of factory girls that if they felt 'morbid and sentimental' about boys they should go out and dig in the garden.

The efforts of the Association's staff to secure the health and morality of the 'future mothers of the nation' was complemented by their promotion of the ideal

33. SMH, 27 October 1919.
34. Association Woman, February 1924, p. 3.
of domesticity amongst women workers. Although convinced that the 'social, economic and industrial conditions of today will not permit the girls to remain at home' the Association was concerned that

... when girls must seek their livelihood in industrial life they should not be allowed to detach themselves altogether from home conditions or to forget the necessity of qualifying themselves for homelife. 36

The YWCAs approved of domestic science instruction in schools and in their own classes offered working women an 'opportunity to learn the womanly arts ... dressmaking, millinery and plain sewing, cooking and first aid'. 37

The Association was sensitive to criticism that its activities disinclined girls for domestic work. Immediately after the war it co-operated with the British YWCA to oversee the passage of women immigrants. On arrival the women were encouraged to join an 'Auxiliary Household Corps' which offered training and found them positions as domestic servants 38. Between 1901 and 1921 the proportion of women engaged in domestic service in NSW who were under twenty years of age dropped from 29.2 per cent to 19.9 per cent. 39 Elsie Hardie the General

37. SMH, 27 October 1919, p. 4.
38. SMH, 4 September 1919, p. 7; 15 October 1919, p. 8; Woman's Voice, March 1920, p. 12.
Secretary of the Victorian Association pointed out that the low prestige of domestic service and the lack of freedom, companionship and opportunities for advancement which characterised this work were foremost considerations accounting for the distaste in which it was held by young working women.\(^40\)

The disinclination of young women to enter domestic service when other opportunities were available ensured that the Association's 'Household Corps', like many similar domestic service schemes launched by women's organisations in the 1920s, foundered on public disinterest.

The increasing preference of young women workers for other forms of employment meant fewer opportunities existed for direct contact with young working women whereby women of the employing class might influence the lives and character of women from the working-class. As the servant/mistress relationship afforded fewer opportunities to mould the mind and heart of youth this task was being taken up by the semi-professional welfare worker. The YWCA instituted training classes for its secretaries, co-operated with professional groups and helped the women appointed to the position of welfare officer in city stores. Its voluntary provision of hostels, clubs, classes and cafeterias may be seen as one attempt to recapture and retain the influence of middle class women.

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40. National Council of Women, Victoria, Minutes, May 1921.
Welfare Supervision on the Shop-floor

The welfare worker's job is to be the friend and adviser, leader and servant of those with whom she works and through all the welfare advantages which the company provides, she can help the girl to find ... a healthy self-respect and a definite ideal of service for others.41

The 1920s saw important developments in the application of welfare work in industry and the employment of educated women to co-ordinate these schemes in the work-place itself. Integral to the conversion of voluntary welfare work into a paid career for trained women was the support of organisations like the National Councils of Women, the Professional Women Workers' Association, the YWCA and various women's societies at universities. At the institutional level the National Council of Women in NSW lobbied the government to create a separate Industrial Welfare Department and to require its officers to be trained for their work42. The Council was joined by the Chamber of Manufactures in its encouragement to extend, and include women in, existing company welfare schemes which had been aimed for the most part at male employees. Company housing and sporting facilities had been introduced in some industries earlier in the


42. National Council of Women, NSW, Executive Minutes, 1 November 1917.
The wartime industrial unrest gave an incentive to this movement.

As early as 1910 A.B. Piddington, commenting on the health and behaviour of women employees, praised the tobacco industry's employment of matrons to supervise its 'girl' employees. In 1917 the National Council of Women sought the advice of a Miss Fraser who was in charge of the Welfare Department of W.D. & H.O. Wills' tobacco works. Miss Fraser described her work as supervising the physical and moral health of young female employees: she gave lectures on hygiene, cared for sick girls, dispensed advice on personal problems including marriage proposals, ran physical culture and sewing classes and had recently opened a savings bank branch at the factory. Miss Fraser considered that young working women attempting to cope with their new found economic independence needed lessons to teach them to dress without 'gaudiness'.

The Council was also informed of wartime developments in Britain in regard to women's health in the munitions industry. Dr Ethel Osborne who was later

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44. NSWPP, 1911-12, Vol. II, Royal Commission on Female and Juvenile Labour in Factories and Shops, Report, p. xxv.

prominent in the Victorian National Council of Women, worked with the Health of Munitions Workers' Committee and its successor, the Industrial Fatigue Research Board, during the latter part of the war. Ethel Osborne first arrived in Australia in 1903 with her husband, W.A. Osborne, who took up the Chair of Physiology at Melbourne University. She was already a science graduate but, family responsibilities notwithstanding, she qualified within a few years as a medical practitioner. After working in Britain during the war years she returned to Melbourne where she sought to publicise the aims and methods of British industrial welfare measures. The recommendations of the Health of Munitions Workers' Committee included the provision of canteens, rest rooms, seats and cloak-rooms and the appointment of supervisors to monitor the health of women employees. The health of workers, Osborne stressed, was an essential part of industrial efficiency.

The YWCA was to provide the initial training for women welfare supervisors. Jean Stevenson arrived in Sydney in 1919 as the new National Industrial Secretary. Stevenson had been General Secretary in Bendigo and Extension Secretary in Melbourne, before being sent overseas in 1917 for further experience and training. She attended


47. Ethel Osborne, 'Industrial Hygiene in Relation to Women Workers', Pan-Pacific Women's Conference Report, 1928, p. 159.
the National Training School of the YWCA in America, taking courses in religion, public health, industrial conditions, social organisation, labour laws, local government and international relations and completed four months practical work with the National War Work Council in Pittsburgh, where she observed first hand the work of welfare supervisors in industry.\(^{48}\)

In Sydney Stevenson set about organising a permanent 'Australasian Training School' for Leaders primarily but not exclusively to train YWCA secretaries. She approached employers to support her school by offering to train women to take charge of their Welfare Departments.\(^{49}\) Earlier the National Board of the Association had initiated a Secretarial Department whose objects were to seek out candidates for Secretarial positions and make provisions for their training. For a while the Department worked closely with the Student Christian Federation and in 1912 the first Australian Training School was inaugurated.\(^{50}\) In the following years the training school was held at irregular intervals and in different cities. Under Jean Stevenson it began to offer training in industrial hygiene, psychology, sociology, social work, social and industrial law and administration.\(^{51}\) Entrance to its

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49. YWCA Sydney, Girls' Week, 1919, n.p.
51. Association Woman, April 1922, p. 10.
courses, which varied in length from about six weeks to several months, was by personal reference and interviews. In 1922 when Jean Stevenson took a term as Dean of the Sydney School tuition fees were £10/10/- for a three month course. Candidates paid an additional £6/1/- to register and had to supply their own text books and board and lodgings\(^{52}\). The selection process combined with the relatively high cost of training meant students came mainly from the middle classes\(^{53}\).

The training school appealed to women who desired 'to become better fitted for any honorary, religious or social activity' but it was also designed to allow welfare workers 'to enter the work professionally'\(^{54}\). The acquisition of theoretical knowledge was seen as necessary for the transition from the voluntary side of welfare to professional employment. The YWCA's own secretaries undertook this training. Other women graduates of the course found employment in industry. Margaret Thorp was a salaried Secretary of the YWCA before going to Anthony Horderns Ltd in Sydney to organise a Welfare Department.

\(^{52}\) Ibid.

\(^{53}\) Although tuition fees were to be refunded if students were eligible and willing to become Secretaries, the level of their salaries did not indicate any substantial economic reward. In 1910 Secretaries employed by the Association could expect to earn from between £60 and £120 per annum. Details of salary levels in the inter-war period are not readily available.

\(^{54}\) YWCA of Australasia, Manual of Training School, Sydney, [1916], p. 10.
for their three thousand employees. Thorp went with Jean Stevenson's recommendation.

Women university graduates also came to participate in and influence the development of welfare training. At the first Interstate Conference of the Australian Federation of University Women in 1922 Dr Constance D'Arcy identified two areas which she considered should occupy university-trained women: to help younger women graduates further their studies and careers and to concern themselves with the welfare of young women in industry. The foundation secretary of the Australian Federation of University Women was Eleanor Hinder who was the Welfare Supervisor of Farmers and Co. in Sydney from 1919. Hinder was the daughter of the headmaster of Maitland Boys High School, niece to the Professor of Medicine and the Professor of Surgery at the University of Sydney and had graduated B.Sc. (Hons.) in 1914 before going to North Sydney Girls High School as science mistress. Hinder maintained her links with the University by giving extension tutorials in biology and becoming an executive member of the Sydney University Women Graduates' Association and the Student Christian Association. Civic responsibility and service to women and children were themes deeply embedded in the philosophies of women's university

55. Association Woman, May 1925, p. 11.


57. Meredith Foley and Heather Radi, 'Eleanor Hinder' in ADB, Vol. 9; Frances Wheelhouse, Eleanor Mary Hinder, Sydney, 1978.
associations at this time. The Sydney University Women's Social Service Society, formed in 1921, aimed 'to educate University women in their altruistic duty as citizens.' At the University's Settlement, located in the inner suburbs adjoining the campus, women were encouraged to run classes and clubs for working-class women and children.

Following her appointment to Farmers Eleanor Hinder frequently addressed the student members of the Sydney University Women's Social Service Society on the importance of welfare supervision. This work, Hinder told the Society, was assuming important dimensions not least because 'Modern business systems had greatly increased monotony.' Workers needed relief from the resulting 'strain'. In the retail industry women were restricted to certain departments designated 'female' and to light and repetitive work. In large department stores women were under pressure to reach a certain minimum in sales. In her work for Farmers from 1919 to 1925 Hinder developed a program designed to alleviate this strain especially as it was manifested in staff/employer relationships. She established staff committees to deal with grievances and introduced training courses partly directed to building

58. Settlement Records, S.32, Cuttings and Scrapbooks, University of Sydney Archives.
59. Settlement Records, S.32, Minutes, Box 1, 11 June 1919.
company spirit. On one hand Hinder encouraged loyal service to the company and on the other arranged for employees to have access to a range of services. In return for devotion to duty employees secured certain medical services, lunch-rooms, rest-rooms, a library and holiday home and various organised amusements such as staff choirs, drama clubs, sporting associations and facilities and educational courses. Hinder's talents for improving staff/employer relations were no doubt responsible for her appointment in 1925 by the National YWCA of China to go to Shanghai for two years tenure on a Rockefeller Foundation grant. Shanghai had just experienced a wave of serious industrial disturbances and it was to be Hinder's role to in part return peace to local industry by organising a welfare program for women and juvenile factory labour.

At Anthony Horderns Margaret Thorp organised a similar welfare program. Under her direction a medical officer and trained nurse were appointed full-time to examine staff and administer first aid to an average six hundred staff members per month, the majority of whom were women, and to give lectures and demonstrations on hygiene and home nursing. Thorp introduced intelligence tests for new appointments, arranged in-store training and organised the cultural and sporting clubs and other facilities which were to become the standard welfare

61. Ibid., pp. 174-75.
The increased efficiency and loyalty of the worker was a strong selling point for the advocates of trained welfare supervisors. Annie Duncan, a factory inspector and member of the Professional Women Workers' Association, told the Health Society of NSW in 1919 that 'medical and welfare supervision - would both increase our output and provide better conditions for workers'\textsuperscript{65}. In 1921 Hinder commended NSW employers to the Health Society for accepting that 'a healthy staff is a prerequisite of successful business'\textsuperscript{66}. Jean Stevenson stated the YWCA case more plainly:

\begin{quote}
In all large business houses and factories in America there are welfare experts ... The American businessman has come to realise that not only does the worker benefit, but that his business also benefits considerably, and directly by this welfare system. The result is happier conditions for the worker and ... more profits for the employer.\textsuperscript{67}
\end{quote}

The YWCA was soon seeking community acknowledgement of the value of the professionally trained welfare supervisor. Moves began to have universities take over the responsibility for training. In 1923 Mary Dingman, the visiting 'World Secretary' of the Association, organised a conference of prominent public servants and business men, chaired by S.H. Smith, the Director of Education and Dr J.H. Cumpston,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{64} Ibid., p. 71.
\item \textsuperscript{65} SMH, 30 September 1919, p. 7.
\item \textsuperscript{66} SMH, July 1920, p. 7.
\item \textsuperscript{67} SMH, 12 September 1919, p. 5.
\end{itemize}
the Director of Public Health, to deal with the 'Human Factor in Industry'. Dingman's contribution to this conference, held in conjunction with the Rotary Club, was an examination of the principles of 'human engineering'. Invited male experts spoke on statistical studies in industry, health insurance, industrial hygiene and vocational guidance. At the end of the day a resolution was passed to ask the University to make provision for the training of social welfare workers 68.

Prospective Secretaries at the YWCA training school in 1918 were taught that

Efficiency means system ... (it) is a form of energy and includes economy of effort ... Habit is the factor of stability in life ... If habits of industry are not formed there can be no system, and employees will lose their heads ... the chief value of habit is to keep the higher hemisphere of the brain for new work ... The dullest employment may be made interesting if we regard it as a stepping stone to ambition. 69

Helping women learn to cope with the tedium of their jobs and grow accustomed to the low level of their wages was one of the YWCA Secretary's tasks. The 'Thrift Clubs' and savings bank branches established by Association officers, in co-operation with established Welfare Departments in factories and large stores, sought to

68. Association Woman, November 1923, p. 15.
encourage the female worker to save for special needs such as life insurance, holidays, a trousseau or periods of seasonal unemployment in their occupation. In 1924 the Melbourne Association collected £11,456 from women workers in fifty-six factories and work rooms while the Sydney Thrift Clubs collected £2,461 from 942 individual depositors.\(^70\) The thrift club purported to be training women workers to manage their wages. It also carried at least the suggestion that the failure of the wage to meet the worker's need was her fault. Attention was shifted from the meagre wage to the 'failure' of the woman who could not 'make do'.

Janet Mitchell\(^71\), Education Secretary of Melbourne YWCA from 1924-26, was a prominent advocate of thrift training. She later recalled that

My work with the Y.W.C.A., especially my intimate contacts with several club girls, had shown me ... that apparent poverty was almost as often the result of unwise spending habits as of lack of means. Given by law an adequate minimum wage, surely people could be helped to attain the maximum happiness from it, if they were trained in income-planning and wise spending.\(^72\)

\(^{70}\) Association Woman, March 1925, p. 12.

\(^{71}\) Janet Mitchell was the daughter of Sir Edward Mitchell KCMG KC, a prominent Victorian barrister and political figure and Lady Eliza Fraser Mitchell CBE who was active in a range of philanthropic organisations including the Red Cross and the Victorian Bush Nursing Association. Janet Mitchell originally studied music but later completed an Arts degree at Bedford College, London. Returning to Sydney determined to avoid life as a bored socialite, she gravitated towards the YWCA. See Janet Mitchell, Spoils of Opportunity: An Autobiography, London, 1938.

\(^{72}\) Mitchell, Spoils of Opportunity, p. 79.
Thrift advice side-stepped the whole issue of wage discrimination against women. In some cases the 'girl worker' living with parents and paying board may have retained some spending money after meeting her basic necessities. For many others low wages left little margin for 'thrift'. Dr Ethel Osborne, inquiring into the health of women in the printing trade, interviewed sixty women workers at random in 1924. Thirteen lived in lodgings and were 'entirely responsible for their own support' and twenty-six of the remaining forty-seven had serious financial responsibilities, 'from the supporting of a widowed mother, along with the upbringing of the younger members of the family, to the partial support of a relative'.

Most of the women in her sample were not able to save. Janet Mitchell's interest in thrift education was rewarded when she was appointed the Thrift Service Director of the Government Savings Bank of NSW. After training in America, she took up her position and organised 'thrift tutorials' for the YWCA. Mitchell's outlines extended the role of thrift into the workplace to include

Thrift of Time - At work, at home, at play. Concentration - the importance of getting on with your job - dishonesty of "go slow" policies and loitering in employer's time ... Thrift of Materials. At work ... waste of office stationery etc by carelessness. Factory waste: individual and collective - and its prevention.


Thrift teachings in this way pushed strongly for recognition by the employee of her obligations to management. Based as it was on 'individual effort, self-discipline and fore-thought', thrift by implication would lift the worker out of penury.

**Industrial Hygiene: Women and Children First!**

One must always keep prominently in the foreground the importance of the conservation of the health of the young women workers for their future motherhood. 76

Maintaining the health of women workers was an important part of the welfare supervisor's role. The supervisor ran physical education classes, sporting competitions and health lectures and organised medical services. Large firms like Farmers and Horderns in Sydney and Berlei Ltd in Melbourne, instituted separate Medical Departments under the supervision of part or full time medical officers and nursing sisters. These departments dispensed first aid treatment, directed workers with medical problems to the appropriate institution and arranged leave for medical treatment. The department also examined new staff members on entry, lectured them on hygiene and kept medical records for all employees. Janet Sorley, the Senior Sister in charge of Farmers Medical Department, noted that by 1923 there were at least fourteen nurses employed in Sydney factories and more than half of these had been appointed in the preceding twelve months.

76. Osborne, *Printing Trade Inquiry*, p. 3.
Nevertheless, the appointment of a handful of women in a limited number of firms was not enough to resolve the health problems of women in industry.

The National Councils of Women acted as a clearing house for information on the conditions of employment of women in various industries drawing on the knowledge of members employed as factory inspectors, welfare supervisors, industrial nurses and medical specialists in the field of industrial hygiene. In Melbourne Margaret Cuthbertson, the first Australian woman to be appointed as a factory inspector and from 1920 Welfare Officer for Myers, was convenor of the National Council of Women's Standing Committee on Trades and Professions. In NSW May Mathews, an inspector in the Child Welfare Department, was convenor of the Trades and Professions Committee and Dr Grace Boelke, a former medical inspector in the Department of Public Instruction and Medical Director of Berlei Ltd by 1924, was convenor of the Standing Committee on Health. Boelke was also a founder and executive member of the Professional Women Workers' Association of NSW whose members, drawn in the main from the medical profession and women employees of the NSW Departments of Health and Labour and Industry, acted as an important lobby group within the National Council of Women.

78. Anthea Hyslop, 'Margaret Gardiner Cuthbertson', ADB, Vol. 8; Commonwealth Royal Commission on Health, Minutes of Evidence, 1925, Q2474.

79. The Professional Women Workers' Association was formed in 1910 as a circle within the Women's Club. For reports of their activities see Women's Club, Annual Reports and Balance Sheets from 1911.
By the early 1920s labour shortages coupled with escalating industrial disturbances fostered the development of the relatively new field of industrial hygiene. It was held that industry could ill afford 'the deterioration of its source of productive power'.\textsuperscript{80} As a sign of government interest the Commonwealth Health Department established a Division of Industrial Hygiene in 1921. The NSW Health Department appointed its own Industrial Medical Officer in 1923\textsuperscript{81}. In 1920 Dr Grace Boelke proposed what was to be the first of many resolutions by the National Council of Women urging upon the Government 'the pressing necessity for a comprehensive scientific investigation into the health of women workers throughout the Commonwealth'.\textsuperscript{82} The Council was kept up to date by the work of Dr Ethel Osborne, a pioneer in the field of industrial hygiene. In 1920 Osborne recommended to the Australian Medical Association and the Commonwealth Government that welfare programs be instituted for all industrial workers and that an expert committee be established to develop a national medical service to industry and to launch far-reaching investigations into the industrial hygiene problems.\textsuperscript{83} The working conditions

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\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{82} National Council of Women, NSW, Executive Minutes, 29 April 1920.

\textsuperscript{83} Ethel Osborne, Industrial Hygiene as Applied to Munition Workers, Melbourne, 1921; Ethel Osborne, 'Industrial Hygiene in Relation to Women Workers', Pan-Pacific Women's Conference Report, 1928, p. 161.
\end{flushleft}
of females and juveniles became the major focus of Osborne's work in the years following the war. In 1919 at the request of Justice Higgins, President of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, Osborne investigated the working conditions of female employees in the clothing trade. In 1924 she undertook a similar study of female employees in the printing industry this time at the instigation of the Printing Industry Employees' Union of Australia which had a case before the Court.\(^{84}\) The 'modern endeavour towards high output and intense specialisation', Osborne reported, had all but eliminated 'the joy of craftsmanship'. The resulting conditions rendered 'much of the work of a highly monotonous character ... monotony of occupation is a factor seriously to be reckoned with'\(^{85}\). As a result of repetitive work, poor ventilation, long periods spent standing, vibrating machinery and long hours women workers were unduly fatigued with consequently low levels of health and fitness.\(^{86}\)

Osborne's main observations were equally as applicable in the case of male or female workers in the industry as were her recommendations on the need for improved conditions. Yet her conclusions made their point

\(^{84}\) Osborne, 'Industrial Hygiene', Pan-Pacific Women's Conference, p. 162.

\(^{85}\) Osborne, Printing Trade Inquiry, p. 8.

\(^{86}\) Ibid., p. 17.
about the urgent necessity for improvements by constructing a special case for female employees. In undertaking these enquiries Osborne started from the basic premise that it was essential in industries where women and girls worked in large numbers that 'the conditions under which their industrial life is spent ... (is) not ... prejudicial to their health, for on the safeguarding of this, one can safely state, depends the future health of the nation'\(^{87}\). Osborne further specified her interest by age. In the clothing trade she found that some twenty-six per cent of women workers were under twenty-one years of age while in the printing industry forty-five per cent of women workers were similarly 'not fully grown'. With such a noticeable proportion of young women workers Osborne remarked that 'it becomes exceedingly important ... that conditions ... be viewed particularly from the point of view of the immature female'\(^{88}\). These workers, she opined, had not yet reached their full physical development; they are still in the formative stage, both physically and mentally ...'\(^{89}\).

The increasing proportion of women under twenty years, and indeed under sixteen years of age, entering industry had been the cause of much comment by women reformers and other observers in the early 1920s. Claudia Thame notes that the demand for labour in the immediate

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87. Ibid., p. 3.
88. Ibid., p. 4.
89. Osborne, 'Industrial Hygiene', Pan-Pacific Women's Conference, p. 163.
post-war years saw twenty thousand adolescents under sixteen years employed in Australian industry annually. Lisa Ritson estimates that in 1919, forty per cent of the female factory force in Sydney was under twenty-one years while ten per cent of this group was under sixteen. The Factory Act of Victoria allowed girls to work from fifteen years and in cases where special permits were granted, from fourteen years of age. In NSW only those under sixteen years who wished to work in factories needed to obtain certificates of fitness for work. Osborne noted that the system of certification was deficient. Certification was 'rarely refused' and the fact that the fee for the necessary medical examination was only 2/6 was an indicator of the superficial nature of the examination given. The majority of permits were given because of the poverty of the parent or guardian whereas 'the real point to be considered should be the health of the child'. The cumulative gynaecological effects of some work processes on juvenile employees concerned Osborne. In the printing trade women operating feeding machines had a habit of pressing 'forward on to the feeding table while placing each sheet in a manner which causes a very definite pressure on the lower part of the abdomen'. She made similar observations about women workers operating push pedals with the same foot continuously. Although

90. Thame, 'Health and the State', p. 245.


92. Osborne, Printing Trade Inquiry, p.4.
she could not marshal any evidence 'that this or that worker has a gynaecological condition due to her work on a machine for, say, ten years', Osborne found it difficult to believe that such work 'is not going to be without some detrimental effect'.

The Victorian National Council of Women staged a public meeting on 'The Health of Women in Industry' as part of Health Week in 1923. Dr Margaret Anderson reported on her work as medical officer for Myers Ltd. Her survey had uncovered an alarming level of spinal curvature and congenital syphilis among working girls aged fourteen to eighteen years as well as dental, nose, throat and eye defects. Muriel Heagney, an organiser for the Clothing Trades Union, touched on the subject of seating accommodation pointing out that lack of seating and faulty posture had a direct influence on the amount of work done during a shift and contributed to the low average working life of women in this trade. Dr Ethel Osborne then expounded on the role of industrial medical officers in conserving the health and efficiency of women workers. As a result of the meeting a number of resolutions were passed. Margaret Cuthbertson, the convenor of the Standing Committee on Trades and Professions, in moving the resolution calling on the Government to ensure that adequate seating was provided for employees in

93. Ibid., p. 6.
factories and that medical certificates geared to the particular industry chosen be made compulsory for all children under sixteen years of age, expressed regrets that the question of wages had in the recent past pushed health considerations into the background.\textsuperscript{94}

In 1925 when the Commonwealth Royal Commission took evidence in relation to industrial hygiene and women workers, Dr Ethel Osborne, Eleanor Hinder, Dr Grace Boelke and Dr Margaret Anderson gave evidence as professional women employed in the welfare/industrial hygiene field and emphasised that adolescent girls working in factories were particularly susceptible to gynaecological ailments and were generally so debilitated by the time they married that uncomplicated pregnancies and confinements were rare. All favoured some form of increased protective legislation which would restrict women and juveniles to the lighter and safer work of industry.\textsuperscript{95} Osborne, Hinder, Boelke and Anderson agreed with the Commissioners on the usefulness of women police officers, for while control of the sexual behaviour of women and girls was one of the welfare officer's duties, supervision generally ended at the factory gate. Additional police-women were needed, they argued, to steer those in 'moral danger' towards girls' clubs and away from undesirable liaisons with men. Dr Grace Boelke added that such officers might aid in the notification and treatment of women with venereal disease, presumably by keeping under surveillance women.

\textsuperscript{94} National Council of Women, Victoria, Minutes, 11 October 1923.

\textsuperscript{95} Commonwealth Royal Commission on Health, Minutes, pp. 503, 546, 517 and 250.
workers who appeared to be 'promiscuous'. Eleanor Hinder took the opportunity to recommend a 'curative' rather than 'punitive' approach to the problem of spreading venereal disease\(^{96}\).

The co-operation of these women professionals and their organisations in the work of protecting the 'future mothers of the nation' encouraged one further measure designed to extend the influence of the female professional 'care-taker'. In 1925 representatives from twenty-seven women's organisations met in Sydney under the aegis of the National Council of Women to consider the 'Younger Girl in Industry'. The conference grew out of the work of the YWCA National Girls' Department committee chaired by Eleanor Hinder. Hinder, A.B. Piddington and Imelda Cashman, Secretary of the Printing Trades Union, addressed the gathered welfare workers and unionists. Most participants maintained that Australia was dangerously backward in its treatment of the juvenile employee. The number of girls aged fourteen to fifteen years entering industry made this matter a pressing concern for trade unionists and women reformers alike. Often these girls received no training and were dismissed as they entered the older age brackets. The displacement of older women by younger women created large numbers of unskilled unemployable women in the eighteen to twenty-five age group. The National

\(^{96}\) Commonwealth Royal Commission on Health, *Minutes*, pp. 503, 517.

\(^{97}\) *Association Woman*, January 1925, p. 8; July 1925, p. 11.
Council of Women had for many years supported raising the school-leaving age from fourteen to sixteen to stem the flow of unskilled juveniles into industry. Trade unionists condemned the increase of juvenile employment but hesitated to support raising the school leaving age as long as the basic wage was calculated on the basis of a man, his wife and two children under fourteen years of age.\textsuperscript{98}

The conference participants failed to agree on the leaving age but resolved to petition the Board of Trade to examine the 'problem' of the increasing numbers of younger women employed in business and industry.\textsuperscript{99}

The National Council of Women and the YWCA called on the Minister for Labour to establish a system of Vocational Guidance Bureaux along 'American lines'. As Eleanor Hinder outlined it, vocational guidance would offer a further opportunity to supervise and protect the 'girl worker' as she made the transition from school to the work-force. The Bureaux would examine the 'girl worker's' medical fitness for work, check the extent of her education, investigate the 'suitability' of the employment area she wished to enter and return her to school if her employment was terminated.\textsuperscript{100} The degree to which the Bureaux would be able to secure for girls the training which would provide them with skills and the ability to improve their earning power was not made clear.

\textsuperscript{98} Association Woman, July 1925, p. 11.

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., National Council of Women, NSW, General Minutes, 28 May 1925.

\textsuperscript{100} SMH, 23 May 1925; E. Hinder, 'The Employment of Adolescents - Some Considerations', Association Woman, June 1925, pp. 10-11.
In the 1920s the women's movement in NSW and Victoria continued to support the prevailing ideology which qualified a woman's work-force participation in terms of her primary role as wife and mother. The women's movement maintained that a woman's paid employment should not impair her potential ability to perform domestic duties and that the most suitable jobs were those which were an extension of family concerns and domestic procedures. Paid work for women was, barring 'misfortune', merely an episode in a woman's life until she took up her 'natural' duties in her own home. Women's organisations were in many ways quite justified in recognising the episodic nature of woman's paid employment. Many women were temporary workers who expected to leave paid employment for the unpaid work of the home. Others were obliged to leave whether they wanted to or not. As few women could enter apprenticeships or develop recognised skills over a long period of employment their interest in their work understandably was seldom great. Ambitions in the majority of areas open to women were pointless since there were few opportunities for advancement for those women who did not wish to marry and leave work.

Because the women's movement saw women's paid employment as an episode prior to marriage, or as a necessary safeguard if a woman was left unsupported, questions of economic independence, the 'right to work' or wage justice were not seen as the most pressing problems facing women workers. The impact of low wages and
employment conditions on the health and morality of women workers did engage their attention. Voluntary schemes to protect women workers, the introduction of welfare supervision and the extension of protective legislation were all deemed necessary measures to 'equalise' the positions of men and women in industry. Such measures would compensate women for their disadvantaged position in the labour market and act as a brake on further exploitation. While women's organised welfare activities often tended to impede the advancement of individual women and to close off opportunities which existed in certain areas, their actions afforded women workers some compensations.

The response of voluntary women's organisations and professional 'ladies' to women's work issues differed from that of trade unions and the organised labour movement only in terms of the intensity and enthusiasm which voluntary and professional 'care-takers' displayed in protecting and guiding 'girl workers'. Labour-force segmentation was a dominant feature of women's work experience in the inter-war period. Women workers were concentrated in a few light industries, a situation which made it easier to classify such industries as 'women's work' and to ignore the relatively low wages attracted by this work. When women penetrated industries previously designated 'male', trade unions maintained their attempts to confine women workers to the least skilled and lowest paid areas of that industry. Protection of the male worker's easier access to jobs which attracted a 'family wage' remained a paramount consideration for most unions.
Once confined to the area of 'women's work', women workers gained the sympathy of organised labour and efforts to ensure their health and safety were initiated. Dr Ethel Osborne's investigations for the Printing Trade Unions in 1924 illustrated this concern and its contradictory nature. Osborne made certain recommendations about the need for health safeguards for female and juvenile employees and the adult female rate was then set at fifty-four per cent of the male 'family wage'. The deleterious effects low wages had on women's health by limiting their options in relation to housing, diet and medical care, were left largely unexamined by unionists. The women's organisations on the other hand attempted to fill this gap by the provision of welfare services. Although some labour activists condemned this approach, there were strong elements of patronage and antagonism in the labour movement's own treatment of working women.

By asserting a special case for women workers based on their needs as present or future mothers, organised women retrieved, albeit temporarily, a role which was women's when philanthropy was a 'ladies' domain. Professional 'ladies' satisfied contemporary criteria for scientific efficiency and training and reclaimed for educated women a 'caretaker' role and some of the authority

that had been eroded since the late nineteenth century by the legions of male 'experts'. Welfare supervision, protective legislation and voluntary services for women were aspects of a wider intrusion into and supervision over the lives of all women under way in this period.

The emphasis placed on women's family role by organised women who had found a larger sphere of opportunity for themselves would disadvantage both skilled and unskilled women workers as the decade wore on. The field of industrial hygiene and welfare services to workers did not develop to the extent originally envisaged by professional 'ladies'. By the latter half of the 1920s, as the labour shortage diminished and unemployment rose, the established welfare departments were eroded and the development of industrial hygiene as a branch of industrial practice virtually ceased. In 1932 the Commonwealth would abolish its Division of Industrial Hygiene as part of the major cutbacks in government spending. The dualities and dilemmas raised by the women's movement's stance on women's paid employment and in particular their failure to actively assert the right of women to economic independence, would be forced painfully into prominence by the depression.

CHAPTER FOUR

THRIFT AND THE PROFESSIONAL HOUSEWIFE

The housewife in many instances needs to consider not only the high cost of food, but the high cost of carelessness in marketing, of carelessness in cooking, in sewing, and in preserving; in short to consider the high cost of waste of food that goes on in her ill-managed kitchen.1

The dominant domestic ideology in the first few decades of the twentieth century confirmed the responsibility of the woman in the home for the welfare of her family and ultimately for the 'efficiency' of the Nation and Empire2. The fulfilment of this double-edged duty required many kinds of activity but basically it could only be accomplished through the careful management of income and the adaptation of the family's living standards to prevailing economic conditions. The dutiful home-worker was identified traditionally by her adherence to the virtues of 'thrift', as seen in her frugal and productive efforts on behalf of her family. As production moved out of the home the duties of the housewife gradually changed; thrifty practices came more to denote the careful and economical purchase of goods and services for the home. The concept of thrift, like the domestic realm in which it was applied, was recast to conform more closely to the

1. The Woman, 1 June 1921, p. 11.
realities of industrial capitalism. These changes altered the nature of the housewife's work. Women now had to be schooled in wise shopping practices and in the skills necessary for the application of industry's products to the home. At the same time, values relating to domestic duties and the quality of this work shifted as new expectations and practices arose to compensate women for their apparent loss of productive function. The overall process generated tensions and contradictions which endure to the present day for the home-worker.\(^3\)

**Thrift: 'The Science of Doing Without'**

In July 1914 a group of unnamed housewives petitioned the NSW Government on the cost of living:

> It is always upon the woman that these things fall most heavily. It is her duty to try to make the limited allowance stretch over an unlimited increase; it is she who has to scrape and screw and contrive to keep the family properly fed and decently clothed on an income which was little enough before prices began to rise.\(^4\)

In the war years to follow the housewife's responsibility for household economy assumed national importance. Women mobilised on the basis of their roles as consumers to attain levels of consumption consistent with the maximum war effort and to stave off the threat to the Nation and

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4. SMH, 22 July 1914.
Empire. With the opening of the first War Loan in 1915 the practice of thrift and denial in the home became one of the more acceptable arenas for the expression of female patriotism and commitment to the war effort. The National Councils of Women, the Australasian League of Honour for Women and Girls, the YWCA and the women's branches of the non-Labor parties all launched 'Thrift Weeks' to promote economy in the domestic sphere. The pennies saved by the cost-cutting home patriot were redirected to war bonds and soldiers' comfort funds.

The call for equal sacrifice meant all sections of society, rich and poor, were asked to contribute to the war effort. Women were urged to follow the example of the prestigious Women's War Economy League in Britain by curtailing self-indulgent spending on fashion, travel, entertainment and servants.\(^5\). For the woman of more modest means, areas where substantial reductions in expenditure could be made still existed. The Women's Commonwealth Patriotic Association, which was formed in Sydney in 1915 to promote domestic and national economy\(^6\), launched a series of lectures and pamphlets dealing with the day-to-day management of the small, servantless home. The Patriotic Association outlined the savings to be made on the family's basic food bill by the 'creative' use of 'left-overs'.

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6. Argus, 26 August 1915, p. 11; Women's Commonwealth Patriotic Association. 'Invitation to Meeting', February 1915, ML Q396.3/W.
and the purchase of cheaper cuts of meat for family consumption. The utilisation of the 'fireless' or 'hay box' cooker\(^7\) to conserve fuel, the patching and 'cutting-down' of clothing and the home production of preserves, vegetables, and poultry carried their message to all homes: domestic economy was essential to national economy\(^8\).

By early 1915 it had become apparent to a number of women philanthropists and reformers that far more practical forms of relief from high prices were needed if women generally were to heed the call for thrift. In Melbourne this awareness was expressed in the establishment of the first Housewives' Co-operative Association. Its founder Ivy Brookes (1883-1970), the daughter of a former Prime Minister and a charity worker\(^9\), married Herbert

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7. The 'hay box' cooker worked on the same principle as a thermos flask. The meal was brought to the boil over a flame and then transferred to a well-sealed box, lined with hay or some other insulation material, to complete the cooking process. Women's Commonwealth Patriotic Association, *Hay Box Cookery*, Sydney, 1917.

8. Women's Commonwealth Patriotic Association, Thrift Series: *The World Turning to Thrift, by a Banker; Thrift: the National Necessity; Thrift in Dress; Mending and Cleaning; Using Left-overs in the Kitchen; Using the Cheaper Cuts of Meat; Hay-Box Cookery; Back Yard Poultry Raising*, Sydney, n.d. [1915-17], ML 331.84/B.

9. R. Norris, 'Alfred Deakin', *ADB* Vol. 8; Rapke papers, ANL MS 842/4, 'Deakin's Daughters: Ivy (Brookes), Stella (Lady Rivett) and Vera (Mrs White)'; Ivy Brookes papers, ANL MS 1924, Series 18 'Liberal Party 1909-14'.
Robinson Brookes, a leading Victorian industrialist, in 1905. With the active support of her husband she became a leading figure in the Women's Section of the Commonwealth Liberal Party and from 1914 was a delegate to the National Council of Women representing the Peoples' Liberal Party. Ivy Brookes sponsored a Women's Co-operative Rural Association in 1913 but the ideal of a co-operative returning a good price to the woman grower, while providing the urban housewife with reasonably priced fresh food supplies, was not a success until taken up by the Housewives' Co-operative Association in 1915. Brookes became President of the Housewives' Co-operative Association. Its foundation Secretary was a Miss Vroland who was already a delegate to the National Council of Women from a Women's Co-operative Guild. The latter was launched in 1907 following a visit by Mrs Ramsay MacDonald who was an advocate of the British Women's Co-operative Guild. Sister Eva Hurst, an Anglican deaconess, had earlier organised a series of meetings of charity workers to consider ways of assisting housewives on limited incomes. She accepted the position of Treasurer of the Housewives' Co-operative Association.

The new association aimed to attract producer members by


providing credit facilities and consumer membership by paying a rebate on purchases. For her 1/- membership fee the housewife was able to inspect produce and place her order which would be delivered by parcel post. By late 1915 the Housewives' Co-operative Association had twenty-three branches in suburbs such as Brunswick, Collingwood, Fitzroy, Footscray, Northcote, Surrey Hills and South Melbourne and had negotiated discount arrangements with a number of shopkeepers. Arrangements were made with the Trawl Fisheries and Co-operative Fisheries' Association to supply seafood to Housewives' Co-operative members. The Association also began to lobby the state government and municipal councils to provide growers' markets throughout Melbourne.  

The Sydney Housewives' Association was not formed until 1917, the year of the 'Great Strike'. The WCTU, the Women's Reform league and a Women's Horticultural and Home Industry Society in Sydney earlier demonstrated an interest in a consumer co-operative serving housewives and rural producers. The Sydney Housewives' Association was started by Portia Geach (1873-1959) who had studied art in Paris, London and New York and had some experience with a New York Housewives' League. The foundation executive

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included the wives of salaried, professional and self-employed men and several journalists. Their organiser, Florence Fourdrinier, was a former employee of the Liberal and Reform Association of NSW, the Australian Women's National League and the Women's Central Committee of the Commonwealth Liberal Party in Victoria\textsuperscript{17}.

Despite the philanthropic tone of the new Association and the background of national crisis a feminist orientation seemed to infuse their objectives and activities from the outset. The Association's first object was to improve the material conditions of poorer women and children. Jennie Scott Griffiths complained in the \textit{Australian Worker} at this time that

\begin{quote}
Unless the wife is 'a good manager' in the way of pettyfogging littlenesses in 'thrift' and other sciences of doing without, there is a very slender margin in the man's wage for ... the family, and the expenses of a brief term of sickness generally results in a swallowing up of any small sum which may have been 'saved' ...\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

At the same time the Housewives' Association argued the case for state recognition of the value of women's work in the home. As Florence Fourdrinier explained:

\begin{quote}
A factor which increases the married man's efficiency, is the fact that his wife works productively in the home, while he contributes his earnings to the family. The part contributed by the wife, though different in character and scope, is equally as valuable as the husband's efforts.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17} Brookes papers, 18/5; \textit{The Fighting Line}, September 1913, p. 21.

\textsuperscript{18} Jennie Scott Griffiths, 'Strike Aftermath', \textit{The Australian Worker}, 6 October 1917.

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ours}, January 1922, Sydney, p. 17.
While others in the 1920s argued for the evaluation and treatment of women as 'workers' on the basis of their activities as mothers, the Housewives' Associations sought to mobilise women around the one function they performed as home-workers which tied them directly to industrial society - their role as that society's chief consumer.

Allied to this construction of the importance of women's domestic labour was the Association's consciousness of the potential power of women as the nation's consumers. Soon after forming the Housewives' Co-operative Association Ivy Brookes launched the Women's Empire Trade Defence Association. The Empire Trade Defence Association encouraged the boycotting of enemy traders but its primary object was to promote Australian products and strengthen Australian industry. It stressed the housewife's incipient power as a consumer: she wielded a 'blood-less economic weapon' which gave her 'tremendous political power' to foster national development. The Empire Trade Defence Association and the Sydney based Women's Commonwealth Patriotic Association did not long survive the war but the ideas which they developed continued to inform and direct the post-war activities of the new Housewives' Associations.

21. The Empire Trade Defence Association was forced for financial reasons to merge with the men's Australian Industries Protection League. Brookes papers, 37/25-30. The Women's Commonwealth Patriotic Association, after staging a successful 'National Economy Exhibition' showcasing a range of Australian manufactured goods from 'labour-saving devices' to the 'Roo' motor car, changed its name to the National Economy League and faded from view. Women's Commonwealth Patriotic Association, National Economy Exhibition, Official Catalogue, Sydney, 1917; SMH, 21 November 1917, p. 7.
The Housewife's 'Call to Arms'

Consumption formed an important context within which the home-worker's perspective on society and political consciousness was developed. The leaders of the housewives' movement sought to demonstrate that women organised around their consumer function exerted power equal to, if not greater than that held by male producers, mercantile interests or the Labor movement. With the impetus of rapidly rising prices in the immediate post-war period and the introduction of the 'profiteer' as a focus for consumer dissatisfaction, the pre-conditions existed to rally a mass women's movement around the call for fair conditions for the home-worker. The Associations invoked images of cross-class female solidarity during this campaign which bear a distinct resemblance to some of the feminist imagery of the 1920s. Overwhelmingly citizens as consumers of one kind or another were placed in opposition to a common enemy, the elusive 'profiteer'. The Housewives' Associations in NSW and Victoria were eager to build up a mass movement and they declared 'war' on all 'profiteers', potential and actual^{22}. Their weapons in this war were their co-operative schemes and their political lobbying for action against 'middle-men'. By these means they hoped to 'ensure the protection of the woman in the home from exploitation and thus enable her to function in her natural sphere as Mother of the Race in reasonable comfort and security'^23.

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23. 'Portia Geach - Champion of the Housewife', loc. cit., p. 6.
The Sydney Housewives' Association petitioned the NSW government in 1919 and in their submission drew attention to the fact that the retail prices of food, footwear and clothing made it impossible for housewives to obtain the necessities to maintain a decent standard of living. They suggested the formation of cost of living tribunals with representation from the Association and the creation of local markets where primary producers could sell direct to the housewife. Elimination of the 'profiteering middle-man' they hoped would benefit housewife and producer. As a result of repeated lobbying at the local level an open-air market was created in Randwick in 1920 and municipal councils in North Sydney, Mosman and Waverley made market sites available. The Labor News congratulated the Association for tackling the problem of high costs. The Labor Party earlier had given considerable support to state-run enterprises - fish shops, abattoirs and brickworks - as part of their political programs but that support was losing momentum. When the Housewives' Association picked up the cost of living issue it emphasised the wage-packet value of the housewife's work as an informed and intelligent consumer. The Association ran marketing campaigns and consolidated the power of housewives. Boycotts were organised to force down the price of sugar and bulk purchases were negotiated.

24. SMH, 6 November 1919, p. 5; 1 November 1919, p. 4; NSWPD, Session 1919, vol. 78, pp. 3305-06.
25. The Lone Hand, 14 February 1920, p. 38.
26. The Labor News, 10 April 1920, p. 3.
In early 1920 the Sydney executive of the Association announced it had arranged to buy and distribute the pear crop\textsuperscript{27}. By then it could claim ten branches and several thousand members in suburbs such as Mosman, Cremorne, North Sydney, Randwick and Paddington\textsuperscript{28}. Its vigilance on prices was rewarded by the appointment of May Mathieson, President of its Randwick branch, to the Necessary Commodities Control Commission as the 'housewife's champion'. She monitored the cost of items such as dresses and blankets and reported retailers whose mark-ups were excessive\textsuperscript{29}. The Victorian Association was similarly asked to assist the enquiries of the Fair Prices Commission in early 1920\textsuperscript{30}.

The Victorian Housewives' Co-operative Association, now renamed the Housewives' Association, was revitalised from 1919 under the Presidency of Eleanor Glencross (1876-1950). A daughter of Angus Cameron, the first trade

\textsuperscript{27} The Lone Hand, 14 February 1920, p. 38.

\textsuperscript{28} In 1934 the Association's journal reported that all records, dating back to 1918, had been destroyed in an office fire. The Housewife, Sydney, March 1934, p. 1. For information on the early activities of the Housewives' Association in NSW I have relied on press reports and an historical series on the Association's origins which appeared in The Housewife, Sydney, Vol. 1, nos. 4-6, March-June 1934.

\textsuperscript{29} The Housewife, Sydney, May 1934, p. 1; NSW Department of Labour and Industry, Necessary Commodities Control Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, 1919-20, NSWSA 2/5729.

\textsuperscript{30} Argus, 1 March 1920, p. 7.
unionist elected to the NSW Parliament, Glencross had an early political training assisting her father. Cameron subsequently became a Liberal supporter and as a young woman Glencross toured NSW and Queensland as a political organiser for the Australian Women's National League in Victoria. Notice was taken at this time of her political acumen and gift for oratory, the Melbourne Argus describing her as the 'star speaker' for Victorian liberalism. She left the League's employ in 1912 amidst some acrimony to work for the rival People's Liberal Party and it was here that she made contact with Ivy Brookes. In 1917 she married Andrew Glencross, a Victorian grazier who shared her interest in Liberal politics having been a founding secretary of the People's Party in 1910 and an unsuccessful parliamentary candidate for the National Party on two occasions.

Glencross drew some inspiration from American initiatives. In February 1920 Mrs Ellsworth A. Corbett, President of the Housewives' League of Trenton, New Jersey visited Melbourne and spoke of her league's successful street markets and co-operative stores. Glencross subsequently planned a 'Gigantic Co-operative Company' to distribute 'anything they can get hold of either direct

32. The Housewife, Melbourne, November 1929, p. 15; Argus, 1 February 1912, p. 9.
33. Brookes papers, 18/370.
34. For further details of Glencross' career see Meredith Foley, 'Eleanor Glencross', ADB, Vol. 9, and Browne, 'Glencross and Weber' in Lake and Kelly, Double Time.
35. Ibid.
from the manufacturer or from the producer. In mid-1920 the Victorian Housewives' Association reported thirty branches handling co-operative purchases of tea, flour, butter, fruit, boots, clothing and sugar. Some items it claimed were available at pre-war prices. Glencross reported women were joining at the rate of over one thousand per week. A press report on the Association's distribution depot at Hawthorn Town hall noted 'how representatives of all classes the members seemed to be'. The following year the Association claimed sixty-five suburban and thirty country branches with delegates from sixty of these branches attending the Annual Conference in 1921.

The Victorian Housewives' Association mounted a strong campaign against the sugar prices set in agreements between the Commonwealth government and the sugar industry.


37. Ibid., 7 July 1920, p. 12; 29 September 1920, p. 5; 2 February 1921, p. 9.


39. Ibid., p. 20.

40. Ibid., 2 February 1921, p. 9.

In 1920, overseas prices fell making the prices in Australia relatively high. The Association lobbied the government to end the sugar embargo arguing that sugar was used in large quantities in the preparation of home-made jams and preserves and was thus vital to the domestic economy of the low-income family. After negotiations with Prime Minister Hughes, sugar was made available at £49 per ton to the Housewives' Association to distribute to members at 5d per pound. The retail price was 6d per pound. The Victorian Association was distributing sugar at £1/10/7½d per bag whilst grocers were charging £1/15/- . The Association also negotiated with the berry fruit growers and the Government to allow equal quantities of discounted fruit and sugar to members for jam-making.

Much of the wider 'anti-profiteering' campaign undertaken in the press and parliamentary arenas was couched in terms which did little to illuminate the identity of the much despised 'profiteer'. The distinction between the retention of a 'fair profit' and 'profiteering' was generally blurred in public discussions of the problem. In their campaign against the sugar embargo the Victorian Association had occasionally accused the Government breweries and jam manufacturers of 'profiteering'. In general the Association insisted the real issue was the action of wholesalers who manipulated the flow of supplies.


44. *Argus*, 21 January 1920, p. 6; 1 September 1920, p. 9.
The organised housewife considered it was the 'Flinders Lane merchants' and not C.S.R. who were the 'real profiteers'.

In its battles against the elusive 'profiteer' the Sydney Association found an early ally in Sir Joynton Smith MLC, ex-Lord Mayor of Sydney and proprietor of Smith's Weekly. Smith allowed them the use of a kiosk in the Imperial Arcade from which to dispense their literature and also exhorted them to greater efforts through his paper. He counselled that 'in the hands of the housewife the boycott is a perfectly legitimate weapon'. By such means housewives could organise and control demand 'to prevent the suppliers from fixing the prices as they choose'. In the propaganda of the Association prices were presented as being determined in the process of distribution rather than at the point of production. This interpretation made 'anti-profiteering' an effective ideological weapon by which manufacturers and their allies discredited their commercial rivals. Smith's initiatives in this case, played out against the backdrop of his attempts to mobilise a middle-class 'League of Citizens' to oppose the 'Bolshevik' and the 'Profiteer', seemed aimed at sustaining and broadening the base of female support for the aspirations of the manufacturers and their allies.

45. Ibid., 2 February 1921, p. 9.
46. The Home, December 1920, p. 92.
When Ivy Brookes was mobilising women into the Housewives' Co-operative Association and the Women's Empire Trade Defence Association in 1915, her husband was President of the Victorian Chamber of Manufactures and of the People's Liberal Party. He emerged during the war as a leading political spokesman for manufacturers and an important member of the state apparatus. In 1918 while President of the Associated Chamber of Manufactures of Australia he was appointed to the newly established Commonwealth Board of Trade and helped form an Australian Industries Protection League. His position in war-time and post-war politics marks the increasing political power of Australian manufacturers. The war-time reduction in volume of imports gave manufacturers the opportunity to expand. The re-organisation of the non-Labor political forces in 1917 reflected these changes. Ivy Brookes and the 'champions' of the housewife who followed may be seen in some ways as engineers of the female wing of the manufacturers' bid for political and economic dominance.

As President of the Women's Section of the People's Liberal Party, the Housewives' Co-operative Association, the Women's Empire Trade Defence Association and after 1919, the Women's Section of the Australian Industries Protection

49. A Patrick, 'Herbert Robinson Brookes', ADB, Vol. 7; McQueen, 'Shoot the Bolshevik', p. 189.

League, Ivy Brookes espoused a staunch commitment to the development of an industrial base to the Australian economy. Although she resigned from the Presidency of the Housewives' Co-operative Association in 1916, she left an indelible imprint on the future strategies and alliances of this body. In 1920 the objectives of the Victorian Association were extended to include the promotion of the development of Australian industry.

The Thrifty Wife

When the Commonwealth government appointed the Royal Commission on the Basic Wage in 1919, officials of the Housewives' Association were called upon to give testimony. This was a welcome acknowledgement of the Association's claim that it spoke for the 'average housewife' and it afforded an opportunity to reinforce the Association's message of the value of the housewife's labours. With a sharp rise in the price of many household

51. Brookes papers, Series 37.

52. Leading members of the Association in NSW and Victoria gained their political experience working with Ivy Brookes in the service of the staunchly protectionist People's Liberal Party. Others, like Rachel Robinson of the Victorian Housewives' Association, were also subsequently employed as organisers for the Australian Industries Protection League. For an account of Robinson's career see The Housewife, Melbourne, October 1929, p. 4; Who's Who in Australia, Melbourne, 1944.

53. Argus, 29 September 1920, p. 5.

necessities after the war coming on top of war-time inflation all women with housekeeping responsibilities were aware of the difficulties of maintaining customary standards. There was a common housekeeping experience which these women emphasised. Ingenuity was needed to make the family income suffice whether the money available was a portion of the wage paid to a labourer or an allowance given to the wife of a professional man or money available in families with unlimited means. The location of most branches of the Housewives' Association in middle class suburbs in Sydney indicates membership probably included many women with husbands employed in white collar and professional work, some on fixed salaries or with incomes which were inelastic against inflation\(^55\). Middle class women recounted with pride their ability to stretch their housekeeping budgets when testifying before the Royal Commission. They gave details of how 'savings' could be made by a wife who was a good manager and prepared to work hard. It was the hard work and the managerial skills of the housewife which they required the Commissioners to acknowledge but they failed to determine how the woman herself could be rewarded. Their demand for a larger

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55. The husbands of Sydney Housewives' Association executive members included salesmen, a banking and finance lecturer and a sawmiller's agent. See Royal Commission on the Basic Wage, 1920, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. 2, Sydney, 1920, pp. 775, 1038. A number of unmarried members supported themselves by journalism or political organising while others seemed to possess independent means. Portia Geach on her death in 1959, left an estate valued for probate at £56,582 in NSW and £9,744 in Victoria. ADB, Vol. 8.
contribution from the worker's wife, and their insistence on the importance of the wife's contribution to the health and welfare of the family, were mistaken by some as an attack on the unions' case for higher nominal wages.

The expert standing of these women as witnesses was apparent from the detailed attention given to their submission and the invitation extended to them to cross-examine other witnesses. Dorothy Jordan, general secretary of the NSW Housewives' Association, was complimented by the Commissioners for the 'point and brevity' of her questions. As well as Dorothy Jordan, Alice Ashley Thompson and Ruby Duncan of the Housewives' Association, Lottie Armstrong representing the National Council of Women and the Women's Service Club and Dr Mary Booth of the Anzac Fellowship of Women gave evidence. The National Council of Women arranged for a number of witnesses to make submissions. Nearly all stressed the difficulties which housewives experienced and the contribution which the thrifty housewife made to her family's welfare. Lottie Armstrong informed the Commissioner that it was 'obvious' that the wage needed to be increased. Alice Ashley Thompson reported that she conducted an experiment with her own family of three children under seventeen years of age, herself and her husband to see


57. See statements of Mary Ellen Roberts, Mary Matilda Chase and Emily Monica Flowers in Basic Wage Commission, Evidence, 1920, pp. 1017, 1022, 1060.

if she could cover their food bill with £4 a week. To a
helpful question from Dorothy Jordan she replied that her
family had attained 'a standard of comfort not of luxury,59.
With £4 allotted to buy food she found this standard
declined considerably. Ruby Duncan stretched £4 a week
to feed husband, brother, four children, herself and a
maid by sending the maid to the markets before 7.00 a.m.
each Saturday morning60. As the basic wage had to
cover more than the family's food bill, with the current
wage set at £4/2/- these women made a strong case for an
upward adjustment to wages. Counsel for the employers
was driven to ask if Mrs Thompson could fairly compare
her style of living with that of a worker61.

Both in establishing the 'expert' nature of
their evidence and in forwarding their claim that house-
wives could improve the material conditions of their
family by thrift, the women who appeared before the Commission
expounded on how the wife of the worker could improve the
material standards of her family by careful planning, by
seeking out the best 'buys', by doing all the sewing for
the family, by learning to make palatable dishes from the
cheaper cuts of meat or by substituting macaroni for meat.
'The Australian girl should be able to make ... her clothes' said Alice Ashley Thompson62. Dorothy Jordan hammered

59. Ibid., p. 1031.
60. Ibid., p. 1071.
61. Ibid., p. 1033.
62. Ibid., p. 1036.
the point in her cross examination of Kate Dwyer of the Women Workers' Union. She questioned the Union's submission on clothing. 'Don't you think she could get things much cheaper by making them?'. In the union case all clothing was costed ready-made. The Commissioner may not have been persuaded solely by the arguments of women witnesses before the Commission but in his report he went out of his way to commend thrift along the lines developed by witnesses from the Housewives' Association and the National Council of women:

... savings by cutting-down etc., are an admirable form of thrift, and ... not in itself the most laborious of a housewife's duties. Indeed, it is far from distasteful, as appealing to the exercise of skill and an age-long feminine art.63

Perhaps hoping to establish a precedent which might in future more fully acknowledge the value of women's work, the Commissioner included in his final determination a small amount, 2/- a week, so that a wife could occasionally pay another to do some of her work: it was the equivalent of the worker's holiday64. Not all those under arbitration court awards were entitled to regular paid holidays in 1920. If the inclusion of this modest amount for the wife seemed to acknowledge the case women had presented for the value of the work done by housewives, evidence from these women was also capable of other interpretations.

64. Ibid., p. 47.
Under cross examination most of the women who gave evidence to the commissioner were critical of the costing of the unions' case or were drawn into making statements derogatory to workers' wives. The amounts which the unions stated for clothing were exaggerated one said. Another admitted workers' wives often 'scorn a lot of economies that I myself do not.' Overall their evidence gave support to the idea that the inability of the workers to make ends meet was due at least in part to the extravagant and inefficient practices of the working-class housewife. Their own efforts to reach out across class to other women were thereby undermined. As the Labor News was quick to point out they gave added support to the 'now common contention that the workers are extravagant and that their distress is directly traceable to that extravagance.' A contributor to the Labor News objected to the Housewives' Association representative's suggestion that the housewife might bake her own bread arguing that 'some suggestions that are valuable in homes with well-equipped kitchens and stocked pantries won't work in little homes where every penny has to be looked at.'

Regardless of the often sincere desire on the part of the Housewives' Associations to alleviate the

66. Ibid., p. 1036.
67. The Labor News, 22 May 1920, p. 3.
68. Ibid., 27 September 1919, p. 5.
situation of the woman in the home, they gave credence to the idea that the working-class wife needed to be instructed in running her home efficiently and needed to practise thrift. They left her exposed to accusations that it was her extravagance and inefficiency that accounted for any failure to cope with inflation. The Report of the Commission acknowledged,

... housewives in a typical family are amongst the most strenuous toilers in the whole community. To cook, wash, sew and keep the house clean ... requires physical work, some of it arduous, during a long stretch of hours and with rare intervals of relief.69

But in seeking to mobilise women on the basis of their domestic role in the community the Housewives' Association and their allies in the National Council of Women served essentially to consolidate the notion that unpaid work in the domestic sphere was the proper arena for women's activities.

The 'Professional' Housewife

Women who know their own value will not work at a business undefined, unscientific, unregulated, subject to the caprice of an employer who understands it no better than themselves. With domestic work a profession, with home work a skilled trade, the girls who now think it a degradation would find it an honourable calling, and the homes of Australia would benefit enormously.70


In the 1920s the 'home' was no longer a 'retreat' or 'haven' from the pressures of an encroaching world; it had become the very 'unit of our society, the centre of our national life, the place where the individual is given such surroundings, ethical as well as physical, as will make or mar his future'. This depiction of the home and family as the 'social workshop' of the nation was vigorously promoted by the women's movement. It provided an important basis from which to press claims for an increased status and influence for the custodians of this sphere. Evidence of a decline in the importance of the housewife's role, in the standards of skill young women brought to bear on their domestic tasks and in the concomitant status allotted such tasks by the community, naturally provided an important cause for concern. The war served to intensify an earlier concern about the domestic standards of the nation's young womanhood. The thrift campaigns raised doubts about the level of skill and efficiency applied by such women to the management of the family income and the proposed immigration schemes to recruit English women for domestic service in Australia tended to cast an unfavourable light on her 'home-grown' counterpart. The reluctance of young Australian women to enter domestic service directly contradicted the women's movement goal of public recognition of the national importance of woman's home work. For many in the National Councils of Women the 'servant problem' related to their

71. Ibid., p. 3.
positions as employers of domestic help. In addition, although it was seldom consciously formulated by the women's groups, the poor status of domestic service was a reflection on all women in the home and especially on those who were increasingly being called upon to do their own housework.

Household labour was not seen as proper work, that is productive work, therefore it was poorly valued and its practitioners had an attendantly low status. Over time the procedures and content of housework had been altered by the introduction of utilities and services such as improved water supplies, garbage disposal systems, sewage, gas and electricity. The development of mass-produced foods and the availability of ready-made clothing and linen reduced the amount of time formerly spent on household production in this area. The transition from open or fuel fires to cleaner and more easily controlled forms of heating and cooking further lightened domestic duties. As more women limited families there were fewer children requiring their care. It seemed that society no longer needed all the children a normal couple could produce. Angela Booth told women that to 'act socially they must restrict their family, since it is the quality, and not the quantity of offspring a State looks for to-day',\textsuperscript{72}

There was some resentment among women at the way male industrialists had pre-empted the productive functions that had once given dignity and purpose to the housewife's

\textsuperscript{72} Mrs James [Angela] Booth, The Payment of Women's Work - A Review, n.d. [1918], p. 3.
role. At the 1923 conference of the Victorian National Council of Women a delegate expressed fears that 'Industrial causes' were tending to break up the home. 'In the old days home was the centre, the work done then is now done by mills and factories.' Nostalgia for a 'Golden Age' of domesticity when women raised large families and controlled domestic industry such as baking, brewing, curing and wine-making was a recurring theme in the women's papers. With the coming of the 'Industrial Age' they had been ousted by machines, deprived of control of domestic production and had 'received in exchange a subject position of drudgery and routine'. Compounding their loss was the absence of younger women to perform the more menial tasks. In their eyes it appeared that young women had followed production out of the home and onto the factory line.

While some observers continued to bemoan the apparent down-grading of the domestic sphere and its workforce by the advances of industry, science and technology, others, particularly individual professional women and allied organisations within the National Councils, sought to turn this process to the advantage of the home-maker. If traditional skills were being lost and women were becoming 'casual labourers' in their 'natural sphere'.


75. National Council of Women, Victoria, Minutes, 29 September 1921.
then it seemed to these domestic reformers that the application of new scientific knowledge and techniques to this occupation would not only increase its efficiency but also prove that the homeworker's role embodied work that was both modern and progressive. Women would be encouraged to return to the home in their paid and unpaid capacities by the promise that housework would become 'as efficiently organised as the work in the rest of the world',76. It would be transformed into an

... interesting profession ... a job with even more possibilities of distinction than any of those outside businesses that the modern woman takes up until she is claimed by marriage.77

Transforming domestic drudgery into an 'interesting profession' entailed the elaboration of domestic expertise and its systematic application. The idea of systematising information on housekeeping was not new. Domestic manuals, house-keeping guides and recipe books had been available since the 19th century78. Such advice recognised the diversity of household experience and resources leaving scope for the housewife to supplement knowledge gained from manuals by advice gleaned through traditional channels. Mothers, daughters, female relatives and friends passed on the household hints and knowledge of basic procedures which these manuals and guides often assumed. The education

76. Florence F. Fourdrinier, 'A Chair of Domestic Economy', Ours, 1 June 1922, p. 13.
77. SMH, 14 July 1919, p. 4.
proposed by domestic scientists denigrated such time- 
-worn skills. Following in the footsteps of the 'national 
efficiency' movement domestic science advocates reasoned 
that the problems arising from the domestic realm could 
only be eliminated by the organised application of science 
and their own professional expertise. There would be only 
one method of performing various domestic tasks and by 
learning this method and the scientific rationale which 
underlay it the domestic worker would become a 'domestic 
expert'.

Domestic science advocates exhibited a strong 
desire that women should share in the fruits of modern 
scientific and technological developments. They wished to 
ensure that women were privy to 'all the sciences connected 
with the big subjects - botany, chemistry, physics, 
physiology, hygiene, even civics, economics and architecture',79. 
All the sciences would be applied to domestic tasks and used 
to upgrade the performance and standing of the domestic 
worker. Advances in the knowledge of biochemistry, dietetics 
and nutrition were to transform the housewife's kitchen into 
a laboratory and her role of cook into that of a domestic 
scientist questing for new discoveries to enhance the 
comfort and well-being of her family. The cleaning of 
domestic interiors and the health of her children would be 
revolutionised by a knowledge of bacteriology. Trained in

economics the housewife would become an expert shopper and her understanding of the significance of her consumer function to the national economy would be enhanced.

This input from the sciences would be valueless unless the home-worker organised her tasks to allow for the study and application of this information. The ideas at the core of the domestic science movement emphasised not only scientific knowledge but also the introduction of business-like methods of management and planning of income and time. The industrial management ideas of Frederick W. Taylor had already spread from the United States to Australia. Taylor proposed to increase industrial productivity by concentrating power in the hands of a managerial group which would determine the most efficient organisation of work. His ideas of 'scientific management' of labour were enthusiastically taken up by domestic scientists. Modern and business-like, it promised to invest housewifery with the trappings of a managerial profession.

In Victoria Stella May Allan, as 'Vesta' of the Argus women's page, was an influential exponent of the new approach to household management. She assured readers that

No woman ought to be occupied all her time with domestic labour, and those who are ... generally owe their troubles to the fact that they do not organize their own work. Method is the great secret of labour ... there is no one who cannot train herself to be definite and methodical in her work.

80. See H. Braverman, Labor and Monopoly Capitalism, New York, 1974, Ch. 4 for further discussion of Taylor's new 'science'.

81. Argus, 8 April 1914, p. 6.
In line with other advocates of 'scientific management' for the home she advised the domestic worker to draw up formal schedules of work and plan each task and its frequency on a daily and weekly basis. Each task was examined afresh with an eye to its most efficient mode of accomplishment in relation to the overall housework plan. The reward for the worker was the knowledge and evidence of household tasks efficiently performed and the added advantage of free time for which she was to allocate space in her planning schedule. Allan herself was living proof of the advantages to women of 'scientific management'. A mother of four, she was a recognised 'expert' in housewifery. In addition she had a Master of Arts and a law degree, worked as a full-time journalist and was an active member of the National Council of Women, the Victorian Women's Graduate Association and a wide range of organisations concerned with infant welfare. A measure of the esteem in which she was held was demonstrated in 1924 when on the nomination of the Australian Women's National League, the women's section of the Victorian Farmers' Union and the YWCA, the Commonwealth government appointed her as an alternate woman delegate to the League of Nations.\(^{82}\)

The National Council of Women maintained a close relationship with the domestic science movement and its proponents. One of the first public actions of the NSW Council in 1896 had been to launch a public campaign for the

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inclusion of domestic science in the curriculum for girls in the state education system\(^{83}\). The Victorian Council, which numbered the Association of Domestic Economy amongst its inaugural affiliates in 1902, continued to support and disseminate the message of domestic education. In the 1920s many of its most prominent members were directly involved in the domestic science movement. Dr Constance Ellis, convenor of the Council's Standing Committee on Health across the 1920s and from 1927 a specially appointed 'Counsellor' to the executive, was a member of the board of the Melbourne College of Domestic Economy from 1912 to 1942. Margaret Cuthbertson, an industrial welfare officer and convenor of the National Council's Trades and Professions Committee, was similarly a board member during the inter-war years\(^{84}\). With the encouragement of these professional women, as well as members and affiliates more directly involved in the teaching of housewifery, lectures, debates and discussions were frequently held on the merits and methods of domestic education. Through their Honorary Corresponding Secretaries and the visits of members to women's conferences in the United States of America, Canada and Europe the development of domestic education in other countries was followed. The International Council of Women regularly sent out questionnaires and the

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84. Members of the College Board are listed in James Docherty, *The Emily Mac*, pp. 298-99.
results of surveys on this area. It urged all National Councils

... to demand in their own countries the scientific study and investigation of conditions and practices in the whole field of domestic science and of home-making and teaching in this field.85

The Councils' lobbying for the introduction of 'scientific' domestic instruction at every level of a girl's education coincided with a re-examination by administrators and educationalists of the goals and methods of education. The heavily vocational nature of the new education gave support to demands for the inclusion of domestic subjects in the curriculum for girls. Education authorities were also intent on introducing a 'scientific' component to this domestic instruction. They maintained that

Traditional usage in management of home affairs has ruled in the past; the aim is now to bring intelligence to the task ... the kitchen as an experimental laboratory may be made of intense interest.86

The schools system was gradually transformed to provide technical and domestic arts training for girls in all states and to make domestic science obligatory in high schools for those girls not intending to go to University87.


87. Ibid. passim.; Reiger 'Disenchantment of the Home', 1982, Ch. 2.
The introduction of these courses did not proceed unopposed. Domestic science had a low status with the teaching profession. When a Western Australian M.L.A. opined that in matters of infant care and cooking 'these little girls could learn infinitely better if at home helping mother', the Australian Women's National League acidly replied that the 'greatest enemy of the Domestic Science teacher is the ignorant mother at home ... Western Australia has added another enemy - the ignorant M.L.A.'.

The League and the National Councils continued efforts to improve and extend the content of domestic science courses. They called for the establishment of University courses in this field and further Colleges of Domestic Economy to train teachers. They sent questionnaires to their affiliates, the YWCA, the Girls' Realm Guild and the Girls' Friendly Society, to monitor the amount of home training girls were receiving at school. If young women showed no inclination to take advantage of the domestic instruction available the National Council said, compulsory courses

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would ensure that no woman escaped its message. Behind the calls for compulsion lay a lack of enthusiasm among working-class girls for education in the domestic arts. In Melbourne the College of Domestic Economy provided diploma courses for domestic science teachers, trade courses for servants and those wishing to specialise in a particular area such as laundry and a general 'housewifery' course for girls preparing for marriage. By the late 1920s the refurbished institution was known as the Emily MacPherson College and it was favoured predominantly by girls from comfortable backgrounds. Some trained as teachers while others prepared for marriage. Increasingly it was asserted that the girl of a wealthier family, 'even given that she will never have to do cooking', needed to be trained, 'in order to instruct those she may employ'. Lady Rachel Forster, the wife of the Governor-General, addressing the National Council of Women of Victoria in 1921, asserted that all women needed to be educated in the constantly changing field of housewifery. She thought this could best be achieved by issuing household efficiency certificates to trained women which they would be proud to show when they reached the age of marriage.

92. National Council of Women of NSW, Minutes, 26 June 1924; National Council of Women, Victoria, Minutes, 23 June 1927; SMH, 11 June 1929, p. 3; National Council of Women, Victoria, Minutes, 23 May 1929.

93. Docherty, The Emily Mac, pp. 91-92.

94. The Ladies' Sphere, 20 July 1923, p. 17.

95. National Council of Women, Victoria, Minutes, 29 September 1921.
The emphasis increasingly was placed on extending this education in housewifery and motherhood to all women. Whether she was an employer of domestic servants or manager of a 'servantless home' the housewife was encouraged to imbibe the new standards and knowledge brought to bear on household tasks and to introduce new skills into her domestic repertoire. In the cities the Housewives' Association staged lectures and demonstrations for members and their daughters on the science of domestic and dental hygiene, psychology and the child, economics and shopping, and nutrition and cooking. The CWA took up the cause in the bush. From its formation in 1922 the CWA pressed for domestic economy colleges in country centres with hostels for students from isolated areas. It asked that a visit to NSW of a domestic economy teacher from the Canadian rural Women's Institute movement be subsidised and when this request was refused protested that it was not merely cooking classes which were needed but training in the 'scientific aspects of home care' in the special circumstances of country life.

To teach the women of the 'warm bush places' to cook and keep house would be an insult, and the Country Women's Association would be the last to offer that slight to the brave and fearless army who are daily fighting the battle of flies and sand and of making-things-do. But there are problems of diet ... that can only be acquired through a certain trained medical knowledge. It is proposed to spread this knowledge as widely through the country as possible.

97. Farmer and Settler, 13 March 1925, p. 15; 17 April 1925, p. 15.
The NSW CWA had a membership of over seven thousand and women distributed across the rural reaches of the state in over 160 branches. Homemaking days, when ideas and solutions to various domestic problems were canvassed, became a feature of every branch syllabus. Portia Geach of the Housewives' Association visited branches to lecture on the value of wholemeal foods and scientific housewifery. Ruth Beale addressed the 1925 Annual conference on home economics in the United States and Canada. The Country Women emphasised that education of this calibre was particularly vital for their members for, where 'household conveniences are unknown, the health and comfort of the whole community depends on the management of women'.

This work spread to Victoria in 1926 with the formation of women's groups modelled on the lines of the Canadian and British rural Women's Institutes. Some domestic and mothercraft instruction was provided through the branches of the Australian Women's National League and the women's section of the Victorian Farmers' Union.


100. See the reports of branch activities in The Sydney Stock and Station Journal and the annual reports of the CWA of NSW.

101. Sydney Stock and Station Journal, 1 August 1922, p. 5; 6 February 1923, p. 5; Farmer and Settler, 24 April 1925, p. 16.

102. Stead's Review, 1 May 1929, p. 25.

but these organisations were basically involved in electoral 'housekeeping' for their respective parties. In 1928 Lady Somers, the wife of the State Governor, called an open conference of country women in Melbourne. It was vital she said to arrest the drift from the country to the city. For this reason there was a distinct need 'for a State wide organised body of Country women untrammelled by political or sectarian obligations',\textsuperscript{104} As a result of this meeting the seven existing Women's Institutes merged to provide the foundation for the CWA of Victoria. In May 1929 it claimed a membership of 1,700 in twenty branches\textsuperscript{105}.

The domestic science movement attempted to rationalise woman's traditional domestic role. Deriving its motivations from contemporary concerns with scientific method it set out to encourage a correspondingly scientific attitude of mind on the part of the housewife, the mistress and the servant. The new domestic subjects of hygiene, nutrition, physiology and economics promised to raise the status of housewifery to that of a profession. What was left unclear was the type of domestic worker who would fill this role as 'expert' or professional in the domestic sciences and the extent to which domestic science would actually influence the form of domestic education offered in schools and Colleges. Women preparing for employment as domestic science teachers received some grounding in domestic science. At the College of Domestic Economy in Melbourne the three year course for teachers included

\textsuperscript{104} CWA of Victoria, \textit{Years of Adventure}, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{105} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 4.
lectures at the University in biology, anatomy, physiology, bacteriology, chemistry and physics but a large part of their course was the acquisition of manual skills in cooking, laundry and needlework\textsuperscript{106}. In state elementary schools and at the Superior Domestic Science Schools domestic instruction remained largely unchanged for much of the inter-war period. The girls took lessons in laundry, cookery, dressmaking, millinery, home hygiene and a range of general subjects such as English, geography, civics and morals\textsuperscript{107}. They were encouraged to visualise their training as scientific but the real lessons were regularity, routine, hygiene and economy and the responsibility of the woman in the home for the welfare of the family and State\textsuperscript{108}. The extent to which the 'average home' was permeated by the ideology of domestic science should not be underestimated. The number of able and dedicated women prepared to lecture on aspects of efficient management and the rationalisation of housework was considerable. Ella Woodruff\textsuperscript{109} of the

\begin{itemize}
  \item[106.] Docherty, \textit{The Emily Mac}, p. 71.
  \item[107.] Martin, 'Domestic Science in NSW', p. 84.
  \item[108.] Arguably the most significant change in the NSW domestic arts curriculum was the introduction in the early 1900s of household accounts training as recommended by the Report of the Royal Commission on Technical Education in 1905. See Martin, 'Domestic Science in NSW', p. 118.
  \item[109.] Before migrating to Australia, to marry H.A. Woodruff, the Professor of Bacteriology at the University of Melbourne, Ella Woodruff had been Principal of the College of Domestic Science in Glasgow and an inspector of domestic science education in the western districts of Scotland. Docherty, \textit{The Emily Mac}, pp. 55, 298.
\end{itemize}
College of Domestic Economy, informed the National Council of Women of Victoria in 1923 that the functions performed by the woman in the home had changed little; her duty was to 'attend to all the needs of the body ... and train and develop the minds of her children' but preparation for undertaking these functions had altered. The housewife now needed to 'train in domestic science, plan both money and time, get suitable equipment, and furnish simply thus leaving herself time to cultivate her mind, and try to take a small share in the life around her'.\(^{110}\) The imagery spun at this time of the home as workshop, laboratory or business, may have given women a feeling of participation in a wider society. It promoted the idea that housework was modern and progressive, advancing and developing in ways similar to industry and business. Its supporters in the women's movement wanted this similarity extended so that work done in the home was allotted a similar value to work done in the economy. They succeeded in linking the work of the home to the wider world of business and industry via woman's role as consumer.

Kerreen Reiger points out in her study of the rationalisation of the home in Victoria that the planning advice offered by domestic science teachers may merely have served to codify existing household practices\(^{111}\).

The woman in the home may not have accepted this system in

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its most extreme form of time and motion studies, rigid planning schedules and use of record systems. What this system did acknowledge was the increasing importance of planning in the housewife's developing role as consumer. A domestic science education encouraged the recording of purchases, the planning of menus, the search for bargains and the organisation of work within the home to allow more frequent visits to local markets and shops. The housewife checked her purchases to ensure that she was getting the best value for her money and the most hygienic and wholesome foods for her family. In this respect, while much of the promise of domestic science seemed illusory, planning advice in the 'science' of shopping did represent a realistic response to the altered nature of the housewife's functions.

The advocates of domestic science made no effort to return production to the home. Instead they put considerable emphasis on teaching women to be good consumers possessed of a 'scientific attitude' which would allow them to make intelligent judgements about their purchases 'independent of the claims of the manufacturer'.


113. Report by Miss Staff Inspector M.D. Kidd, Appendix No. 16(b), in NSW Department of Public Instruction, Report of Minister ...1934, NSW PP, 1935.
'conservation of income' was still an important part of this education, increasingly the concept of thrift attracted negative connotations. Economy of effort and income management were gradually becoming dependent upon the housewife's ability to be a 'scientific spender' not saver of the family income. The comments of E.M. Devitt, a domestic science teacher writing for the YWCA's magazine in 1919, demonstrates this shift:

The need for thrift and the sinfulness of waste is being put before us every day, and that good housekeeper whom we all number amongst our acquaintance is certainly a thrifty one ... (but) do we ask what is wasted? Money and food are the chief items in the housewife's mind. Does she consider the waste of effort caused through inconvenient planning of her house and rooms, needless furniture and decorations involving extra work, and the use of antiquated methods and appliances which should have been superseded by scientific processes and modern equipment?114

While traditional household tasks required manual labour and skill, the new 'scientific housewifery' required planning, training, and the wherewithal to purchase the trappings of the 'efficient home'. Accompanying these accoutrements of the modern home were the services of a new range of domestic 'experts'. In their hands education rapidly became not much more than supervision.

Despite the return to more prosperous times for workers and employers by 1923, an obvious gulf remained between the material resources commanded by the wives of salaried and self-employed men and those in working-class

homes. Deteriorating economic conditions widened this gap even further at the end of the decade and seemed to negate the claims of organisations like the Housewives' Association to represent a wide range of women. At the same time significant changes were overtaking the domestic realm. The housewife's labour was being profoundly affected by developments originating outside the home - in the production lines of industry, in the laboratories of science and in the classrooms of the state education system. The resulting combination of structural and ideological change, fanned by a women's movement eager to update woman's traditional realm, did lend further credence to the developing image of the 'average housewife'. Although the 'efficient' techniques and tools used by this ideal homemaker would remain out of the reach of the majority of domestic workers, her example would set the standards and fuel the aspirations of a generation of women.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE 'SCIENTIFIC SHOPPER'

We need education and discrimination in buying, especially when science, discovery and invention create new demands and unfamiliar goods daily come on to the market with extravagant claims to merit by the makers.¹

Household purchasers in the 1920s were faced with a bewildering array of new products and devices. Their mothers in previous generations had not ordinarily shopped for items like a Sunbeam electric iron, a Westinghouse Automatic Electric cooking range or for Mazda Electric Lamps from the Australian General Electric Company. Traditional recipes for family meals, cleansing agents for the home and the all-purpose home-made soap were being rapidly superseded by the more modern preparations provided by industry. Clothes, stockings and linen, once produced by the mistress in the home with an eye to durability, were now available in an increasing variety and in fashionable styles which became out-dated in a few seasons. While domestic science educators provided the school girl with some preparation to face this onslaught of commercialism, other organisations and groups endeavoured to bridge this gap in the shopping knowledge of women already responsible for their family's budget.

¹ Mary E. Moss, Herself, 17 September 1929, p. 13.
The Housewives' Association was almost alone amongst women's organisations in the inter-war period in recognising that the housewife's function as consumer for the family represented a significant departure, not only for women, but for the developing capitalist production process. Mary Moss, a 'shopping expert' for the Housewives' Association in Sydney in the late 1920s, drew particular attention to the challenge of woman's new economic function proclaiming that

She is the world's consumer of goods and services for building and nourishing life ... He is the world's producer of goods and things.

Through the Association's activities the housewife learnt new skills relating to the disbursement of the family income and the acquisition, transformation, servicing and disposal of the products of industry. At the same time, the development of capitalist markets depended on the promotion of consumption as a way of life. The housewife had to be stimulated to demand the 'modern' and 'scientific' item or service over the home-made article or time-worn domestic method. The Housewives' Association, in conjunction with the domestic science movement, provided a compelling rationale for this demand.

2. The following comments by Moss are drawn from her column on shopping and home-care published monthly in the magazine Herself. This magazine catered for the interests of a wide range of women's organisations, including the Housewives' Association, the National Council of Women, the Australian Federation of Women Voters and the Feminist Club. Initially published by Nell Dungey, later issues are apparently the work of a 'directorate' which included Muriel Swain, an active member of the National Council of Women and the YWCA. Several members of the Feminist Club were also on this 'directorate'.

By the mid-1920s the Association's earlier emphasis on an older and more moralistic notion of 'thrifty' had eased, to resurface only in the depths of the depression. 'Scientific spending' took over from 'thrifty' as the dominant theme of housework shifted from 'making-do' to 'scientific management'. As a domestic virtue thrift no longer seemed adequate either for the 'efficient' homemaker or the expanding capitalist market place. Mary Moss explained that women had to be educated to understand that

... it is as important to Consume as it is to Produce. It is as important to Spend as it is to Make. Thrift may be and often is the greatest extravagance.  

Although the full flowering of the consumer culture would come only in the wake of the second World War, the groundwork for this development was fashioned in the inter-war years.

The Housewives' Associations had largely dismantled their co-operative enterprises by 1923, replacing the benefits of group-buying with a range of classes, lectures and demonstrations in domestic science. Successful housekeeping and the personal esteem of the 'efficient' housewife still depended on an ability to stretch the household income by bargain hunting. Membership of the Association offered advantages in the form of a system of discounts for members from selected outlets. In 1926 the Victorian Association offered members discounts from a range of city firms including a draper, chemist, dentist, jeweller and

photographer. By the end of the decade the list had expanded to include a book maker, milliner, retailer of boys' clothing, dressmaker, fish and poultry suppliers, greengrocers and an electrician. The NSW Association distributed over one thousand discount cards to members in 1930⁵.

Protecting housewives from unscrupulous traders still ranked high on the Association's list of priorities. No longer 'profiteers', traders were nevertheless members of a group whose interests were considered to be at variance with those of the consumer. The expansion of the range of goods available and the resulting competition between traders opened the way for 'sharp practices' among rival firms. The housewife had to be steered through a maze of competing claims and guarded from the deceit of 'sales psychology'. Mary Moss warned:

Frequently we fall victim to the "go-getting" element pervading some apparently respectable and much-advertised firms - a corrupt use of psychology of salesmanship is not confined to tramping canvassers.⁶

The housewife was encouraged to take advantage of the labour-saving benefits of the new forms of processed foods and other domestic consumables which she was told were prepared in laboratories under standards to which she could only aspire. Domestic science and mothercraft educators placed pressure on the housewife to ensure that the products she bought for the home were prepared

⁵ Brookes papers, 38/67; The Housewife, Melbourne, September 1929, p. 4; SMH, 6 December 1930, p. 91.
⁶ Mary Moss, Herself, 17 September 1929, p. 13.
hygienically and contained the correct balance of nutritional components. These directives became more widespread at a time when the ingredients, preparation and distribution of such goods was passing from her hands. Portia Geach followed the teachings of Dr Alan Carroll and held a particular brief for the use of wholemeal flours and bread. As part of Health Week in 1924 the Housewives' Association of NSW sponsored a demonstration of cooking with wholemeal flour at the showrooms of the Metters Company. Demonstrations of this nature continued to occupy much of the Victorian and NSW Associations' attention in the 1920s. In 1925 the NSW Association issued the first of its cookery books with a preface by Dr Purdy. 'Dainty dishes' were treated with disdain and stress was instead placed on the production of 'properly balanced arrangements of the elements of nutrition'. The Association also launched a range of campaigns opposing the sale of chilled eggs as new-lain, the use of chemicals in butcher's shops and the sale of unwrapped bread. Lecture courses

7. Geach was a delegate to the NSW National Council of Women in 1918 from Carroll's Child Study Association. Carroll taught that one of the 'most potent factors in causing disease is the use of wrong and unsuitable foods'. The Progressive Journal, 4 September 1935, p. 28; National Council of Women, NSW, Biennial Reports, 1921-22, p. 30.


were arranged for members on the 'sanitary reform' of food legislation.\textsuperscript{10}

Association meetings at the central offices and at the branch level provided an informal forum for members to compare notes on the relative merits of goods available in the market-place. By the end of the decade a more formalised approach to comparison shopping was suggested by women such as Mary Moss, who favoured the establishment of a 'White List and Proving Plant'.\textsuperscript{11} Several years later a Good Housekeeping Institute was established by NSW members. The idea for the Institute was drawn from consumer research bureaus already in operation in Britain and America. The members of the Institute, in conjunction with domestic 'experts', were to test the quality and performance of manufactured goods and processed food items and to award a 'Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval' where merited.\textsuperscript{12}

Most of the Association campaigns in this area were based on the belief that consumers could only become more efficient and informed through group effort. The Association considered that the individual housewife, buying for the small family group, could never learn enough to ensure that she was receiving the best value for her money. She needed the protection of a network within which information about the availability, price and

\textsuperscript{10} National Council of Women, Biennial Report, 1926-28, p. 38; \textit{Herself}, 5 June 1930, p. 31; SMH, 9 April 1929, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{11} Mary Moss, \textit{Herself}, 17 September 1929, p. 13.

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{The Housewife}, Sydney, April 1934, pp. 18-19
quality of goods could be debated and circulated. Information alone however, was not enough to redress the balance of power between consumers and business. Direct action to highlight overpricing and substandard production or inefficient distribution continued to be a feature of the Association's campaigns.

In Victoria the Housewives' Association maintained a running battle with the Master Bakers' Association over the level of prices and the Bakers' monopoly on bread production. The Housewives' members were mobilised at the branch level and encouraged to patronise only those independent bakers who flouted the Bakers' set prices. A number of deputations were mounted to expose the attempts by the Bakers to intimidate independent bakers. Demonstrations were held on the home-baking of bread and plans were launched to organise women to change from their regular baker to other suppliers in an effort to disrupt the supply of bread. The Association's zealous regard for the comfort and well-being of its membership was also extended to other services. In the early 1920s they rallied members to protest against the increased price and declining quality of gas supplies. Gas services were often disrupted in this period and the poor pressure, odour and inadequate temperature controls of gas appliances rendered the housewife less self-sufficient than she had been with the traditional wood-fire.

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stove. At a 1923 protest meeting Alice Thomas, the Acting President of the Association, urged members to complete the business rapidly as 'poor gas pressure' meant that 'long absences from home might mean badly cooked dinners'. As well as inciting public outrage over the cost and quality of the service and making this discontent known to the State Treasurer and the Premier, the Association found other ways to pressure the gas companies to produce a better service. At the 1923 protest meeting the Association's members lingered long enough to observe a demonstration of a 'new fireless electric cooker'.

The Housewives' Association's interest in consumer welfare was not limited by local concerns or state boundaries. With the establishment of the Federated Housewives' Association of Australia in 1923, it had an organisational structure capable of centering the Association's demands on Federal and State policy that influenced consumer conditions. In the latter half of the twenties the Association set up Tariff Committees at the state and federal level. These Committees sought to educate both the community and the Government to recognise the direct link between the national economy and the family

15. Argus, 1 August 1923, p. 8.
16. Ibid.
17. SMH, 22 October 1927, p. 11; Brookes papers, 38/66; SMH, 2 November 1929, p. 11.
budget and the need for women to be represented in policy-making at all levels. As the system of bounties and tariffs 'undoubtedly increases the cost of living, and so minimises the benefits of high wages', they explained, it was 'certainly a matter of importance to women, for the peace and prosperity of home, as well as of the nation, depends on a wise administration of tariff laws'.

The organisation of the sugar industry continued to be a thorn in the side of Association leaders. In 1923 the financial and marketing control of the sugar industry was transferred to the Queensland Government upon certain conditions, which included a reduction in the price of raw sugar to £27 per ton and provision to enable refined sugar to be retailed at 4½d per pound. These prices were maintained on the renewal of the sugar agreement with the Commonwealth in 1928 and 1931. The Commonwealth had intended to relinquish control of the industry and substitute protection by tariff. By the time it was in a position to dissolve the agreement foreign production of sugar had outstripped demand and sugar prices had fallen to a level low enough to menace the existence of the Australian industry. The Housewives' Association was eager to see the abolition of the sugar embargo. It declared that the sugar industry 'provided the most striking example of the unscientific handling of protection

18. The Housewife, Melbourne, 5 December 1929, p. 3.
and was an inefficient system for which the Australian table had to pay\(^{20}\). It considered that the Government was subsidising an export trade which could never hope to satisfactorily compete in foreign markets. At the 1928 Federal conference of the National Councils of Women Glencross attempted to gain support for a wide-ranging woman's protest against the renewal of the embargo. The opposition of Queensland delegates and the unwillingness of a number of other States to commit themselves on this issue resulted in the failure of the motion\(^{21}\). The National Councils instead reaffirmed their long-standing demand for the representation of women on the Tariff Board and other boards and committees dealing with consumers' interests.

In 1926 the Federal and State branches of the Housewives' Association reacted with indignation to the imposition of the Paterson Butter Scheme which placed an import duty on butter. Under this scheme the home consumption price of butter rose by the amount needed to cover the gap between the return on exports and what was deemed a reasonable return to the producer\(^{22}\). The Associations threatened to cut members' butter consumption by half if prices continued to rise\(^{23}\). The greater part

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23. Brookes papers, 38/66.
of the excess price of butter in Australia was due they
claimed 'not to the costs of other protection, but to the
specific disability of the butter industry, whether due
to natural causes or to human deficiencies'\textsuperscript{24}.

The Housewives' Associations did not reject
completely the need for protection of Australian and
Empire industry and trade but argued for an extension of
this protection to the interests of consumers. They
pointed out that it was

... the policy of our Association to
encourage local industry and foster trade
within the Empire, but, as consumers, we in our turn expect protection against
exhorbitant prices and inferior goods. When tariffs, bounties, and embargoes are
used to cloak inefficiency, pamper unsuitable industries, or encourage over-
production, it is time to call a halt.\textsuperscript{25}

The importance of fostering local and Empire industry was
a central tenet of the Association. In 1921 the Victorian
Association co-operated with the Australian Women's
National League, the National Federation, the Australian
Industries Protection League, the Australian Natives' Association and the Victoria League in moves to stan-
dardise Empire goods and introduce a distinctive Empire
Trade Mark\textsuperscript{26}. In their study of the tariff lists in the

\textsuperscript{24} The Housewife, Melbourne, 5 November 1929, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 5 December 1929, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{26} The Woman, February 1921, p. 359.
late 1920s the Victorian Housewives emphasised that they were seeking to reduce only those tariffs which would not injure efficient Australian industries. In this work they were assisted by the British Manufacturers' Association which counselled that the reduction should only be on imported British goods. Eleanor Glencross, the Federal President of the Housewives, was the only woman member on the executive of the Pendulum Club, a body set up to further the sale of British goods. Much of the Housewives' Association's work was designed to 'awaken women to their Empire responsibilities regarding their spending power'. As unemployment increased in the late 1920s this support hardened. Housewives were instructed to demand Australian-made goods and products and failing that to ask for British. They should refuse to shop with firms which did not stock such goods. Their support of protection and preference, however, continued to be contingent on the ability of the industry to produce a correspondingly high quality product.

The Housewives' Association believed that women needed representation at a level higher than that provided by the pressure group activities of the various women's leagues. The Victorian Association's Tariff Committee reported in 1929 that on tariff schedules

27. SMH, 22 October 1927, p. 11.
29. SMH, 2 November 1929, p. 11.
The majority of ... items were reminiscent of the cookery book or the household advertisement in the daily paper. In fact we soon decided that a mere man was quite incapable of dealing with such a mass of domestic detail without expert advice, and were strongly of the opinion that a woman should be permanently appointed on the Tariff Board.30

The adequate representation of women on all policy-making boards and committees and on municipal and parliamentary bodies was a central demand of the Housewives' Association. In 1922 Glencross and the Victorian Association were amongst the foremost participants in the inauguration of the Victorian Women's Citizen Movement which sought to remove restrictions against women's entry to state parliament and to secure the election of women to all public bodies31. One of its first tasks was to co-ordinate Eleanor Glencross' campaign for the Federal seat of Henty32. Undeterred by her initial failure to win office Glencross worked to ensure that representation remained a major priority for the Housewives' Association. Referring to the refusal of the Government once again to appoint a woman to the Tariff Board she declared that women

30. The Housewife, Melbourne, 5 December 1929, p. 3.

31. The provisional committee of the Victorian Women's Citizen Movement included the President of the National Council of Women and several executive members of that body in addition to representatives from the Housewives' Association, the National Federation, the Women's Country Party, the WCTU and the Melbourne Ladies Benevolent Society. Argus, 10 August 1922, p. 7; 15 August 1922, p. 12; The Woman's Voice, 1 September 1922, p. 13.

... have been sneered at and despised by men in power because they think they hold that power forever. We have got to have a new organization ... (to) turn ourselves into a political entity and place women in power in sufficient numbers.33

In their quest for representation the women of the Housewives' Association and a range of allied women's reform organisations developed new rationales for the appointment and election of women to positions of power. Increasingly, the older references to a spiritual 'woman's point of view' which needed expression were replaced by arguments which emphasised the benefit to the community of electing scientifically trained housewives to public office. The ideology of 'National Housekeeping' involved a recognition of and attempted adjustment to the historical changes which were integrating the household with the rest of 'the world'. Separate sphere ideology was recognised as less tenable as the state and industry entered the home at every point. While not wishing to upset the age-old tradition that 'woman's best sphere is the home and family' the Association maintained that 'as the work of Parliament touches very closely the affairs of "home and family", women should have their just share in the actual work of Government'.34 Similar but separate arguments were used by the suffragists at the turn of the century.

33. Argus, 1 July 1925, p. 8.
By the 1920s women claimed special expertise in areas such as health, hygiene and infant welfare - all areas in which the Government increasingly intervened. As 'scientific shoppers' and efficient managers of household budgets they could also lay claim to a special knowledge and ability to apply economy to the fiscal dealings of government. Women, the Housewives' Association maintained, possessed an 'outstanding propensity for thrift',\(^\text{35}\). The belief that women were becoming domestic 'experts' in a wide range of activities relevant to the affairs of local, state and federal government strengthened the resolve of a number of women to offer their services in the public political realm.

The Women's Reform League, on the passage of the Women's Legal Status Act in NSW in 1918, noted that although they still did not agree with the entry of women into parliament, they fully supported their election to municipal council. Responsible for the immediate environment of the home, councils were held to be the perfect means by which women could complete their 'apprenticeship' for 'power'. Moreover councils represented a forum for which women were well suited by training:

As the Local Government Act has been termed the 'Housewife of the State', this indicates that women are best fitted to deal with those sanitary and social questions, which affect the home. The study of civics coincides with every domestic experience, and ordinary house-keeping forms the best preparation for the larger house-keeping of the community.\(^\text{36}\)

\(^{35}\) The Housewife, Melbourne, October 1929, p. 7.

\(^{36}\) The Woman's Voice, September 1919, p. 1.
The Women's Reform League formed a municipal study circle in 1920 which supported several women candidates in the early 1920s. Annie Roberts, a foundation executive member of the Housewives' Association and a prominent member of the Women's Reform League and the WCTU, was aided in her unsuccessful bid in the North Sydney municipal elections in 1922. Under pressure from these and other organisations the National Council of women agreed to endorse 'non-party' women candidates for councils in 1921 but they offered no further material support. In Victoria the Council was also pressed for some positive support but despite frequent discussions of the issue little was done of a practical nature to support women's candidacy.

Several women, including Angela Booth and Mary Rogers, a leading member of the women's labour movement, were elected to councils in Victoria in the mid-1920s but without the financial support of the National Council of Women.

38. The Woman's Voice, December 1922, p. 11.
40. National Council of Women, Victoria, Minutes, 22 May 1919; Argus, 1 August 1922, p. 12; National Council of Women, Victoria, Minutes, 23 May 1923.
41. Angela Booth was elected to the Warrandyte/Doncaster Shire Council in 1926 and held this seat until 1933. See Grant McBurnie, 'Angela Booth' in Lake and Kelly, pp. 317, 320.
42. Mary Rogers was Victoria's first woman councillor. A former Labor Party organiser, she was elected in Richmond in 1920 with the party's backing. Jocelyn Clarke and Kate White, Women in Australian Politics, Sydney, 1983, p. 32.
Women. From the mid-1920s the Housewives' Associations began to support women municipal councillors. In Victoria some of the branches became known as Housewives' Progress Leagues because they took a keen interest in local municipal affairs, attending council meetings and reporting to their branches on business discussed by local councils. A number of branches also allied themselves with district ratepayers associations for united efforts on matters such as local public transport facilities. The NSW Association arranged courses in citizenship and civic administration for its members to equip them for public position. In 1930 the President of the NSW Housewives' Association, Florence Cochrane, stood unsuccessfully for the Sydney Council elections.

The barrier to women's election at municipal level helped focus the aspirations of women's organisations upon the election of women to parliament. By 1926 Eleanor Glencross, the newly elected President of the Victorian National Council of Women, was well placed to keep the issue of women candidates in the foreground of Council discussions. She asked the Council to agree to the formation of special campaign committees to assist the candidature of women for public office and repeatedly raised the issue at state annual conferences and at the federal level but met with little success. She was

43. Brookes papers, 38/67.
44. SMH, 7 December 1929; 18 July 1929, p. 5.
opposed in 1928 by members who feared that 'if the Council were, through the medium of its committees, to enter the arena of political strife, even though it would do so as a non-party organisation, it would undoubtedly lose in influence and status.' Glencross nominated for office again in 1928, standing as an independent Nationalist at a by-election for the Victorian State seat of Brighton. She had the support of the WCTU. Her own reputation as State and Federal President of the Housewives' Association and Victorian President of the National Council of Women was demonstrated by the capacity crowds attending her meetings. However she was again defeated. During the election campaign she distinguished herself from her opponents by the emphasis she placed upon family and consumer issues. She advocated at extension of baby clinics to country areas, a chair of obstetrics at the University, legislation to ensure a pure milk supply and increased control over the marketing and pricing of fruit, eggs and dairy produce, better housing conditions, stricter censorship, the appointment of more women police and women to municipal councils and the introduction of prohibition. Glencross later denied that she had fought the campaign on 'women's questions' alone and pointed to her interest in cheaper transport fares, the introduction of measures of unemployment relief and training for the


48. For a full account of her campaign see Browne, 'Glencross and Weber' in Lake and Kelly.
unskilled and her opposition to the reinstatement of
police officers who had taken part in the 1923 police
'mutiny'⁴⁹.

Glencross sought Nationalist pre-selection and
was critical when they failed to endorse her. Nell Martyn
and Angela Booth had also failed to gain Nationalist pre-
selection for state seats in 1927 despite their
qualifications⁵⁰. The Nationalists, said Glencross, were
'strongly opposed to women taking their place in public
life, except to work for them cheaply'⁵¹. Despite the
pre-selection setback, when preferences were finally
distributed Glencross was in second place, only 531
votes behind the endorsed Nationalist⁵². While the result
caused some excitement amongst organised women's groups,
being the closest any woman had come to winning a seat
at State or Federal level in Victoria, the result in
Brighton owed much to the disarray of the Nationalists'
forces in the electorate, the large field of candidates
and the distribution of Labor Party preferences⁵³. Even
with party support women candidates had to combat
community prejudice as the North Brighton branch of the

⁴⁹. Argus, 12 April 1928, p. 6; Browne, 'Glencross and Weber', p.347.

⁵⁰. Argus, 24 April 1928, p. 7. Nell Martyn managed her
father's steel company, was President of the YWCA of
Victoria and the Business and Professional Women's
Club and also a speaker for the Australian Women's
September 1926, p. 301.


⁵². Ibid., 30 April 1928; 3 May 1928, p. 17.

Housewives' Association and the Victorian Women's Citizen Movement discovered in the following year when they formed a campaign committee to support the endorsed Nationalist candidate, Angela Booth, in her unsuccessful battle for the same seat.  

The Housewives' Association persisted in its belief that women could win office despite the power of the party machine. What was required was sufficient women willing to knock at the door of the citadel of masculine power and demand entry. They counselled housewives that woman's 'business - the care of the home and the education of the children - onerous as it may be, does not preclude her from taking a more active part in the body politic'. Many of those women contemplating or attempting to stand for parliament in the 1920s found that the pressure of family responsibilities undermined their campaigns. Edith Jones, despite the promised support of the Victorian Woman's Citizen Movement and the Australian Federation of Woman Voters, was forced by family commitments to withdraw her nomination for the Federal seat of Fawkner in 1925. She echoed the conviction of a number of female aspirants when she said that the 'lack of domestic help is the reason why Australian women have made little or no attempt to enter

54. The Housewife, Melbourne, December 1929, p. 4; Bessie Rischbieth papers, ANL MS 2004, 4/47 contains election material relating to Booth's candidacy.

55. The Housewife, Melbourne, October 1929, p. 2.

the arena of Parliamentary or Municipal politics.\(^57\).

The servant problem was not new. In the 1920s the housewife was invited, for a variety of reasons, to consider 'streamlining' her domestic realm by dispensing with the services of a live-in 'general' servant. Contemporary observers singled out the entry of young women into industry as a cause of the declining supply of servants. Luring these young women back into the home by improving domestic conditions, hours and wages, raised other problems. Mistresses were cautioned to remember that,

If there are only a given number of female workers in a community, and if housework is made so attractive as to deprive the factories of their workers not only would the manufacturers be up in arms, but so would the community itself which needs the articles made in factories ... the women who lament the lack of maids would more loudly lament the lack of soap, starch, biscuits, blankets, bedding, boxes ... each and every article of daily use now turned out from factories.\(^58\)

The author of this piece of cautionary advice, Ada Holman, did not envisage that housewives should take on all the household's tasks. Earlier she had complained of the waste of human talent in a society where 'many a woman stands at the washing-up dish, who might be guiding the destinies of a nation, or enriching the world by her researches'.\(^59\)

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59. See *The Fighting Line*, September 18 1915, p. 16. Ada Holman was a journalist who had continued to work at her profession after her marriage to W.A. Holman. See Heather Radi, 'Ada Augusta Holman' in *ADB*, Vol. 9.
Rather than 'tinker with worn-out tools' Holman suggested a radical reappraisal of the organisation of domestic life with the provision of wholesale external services for meals, cleaning and repairs, improvements in domestic architecture, a revision of necessities and luxuries and acceptance of the need for machinery to replace the labour of servants.\(^{60}\)

Domestic science experts lent further support to the 'servantless home'. During a National Council of Women discussion of the servant problem in Melbourne in 1921, Brenda Sutherland, the Principal of the College of Domestic Economy, suggested that the real solution was for the 'better middle class women' to set an example by doing their own housework and putting the money saved by this economy into 'labor-saving' equipment.\(^{61}\) Increasingly the sentiment was voiced that for reasons of efficiency, economy and privacy, the mistress herself should take over from the servant. The servant was being rendered unnecessary by the advances of science and technology. If housework had taken on the dimensions of a profession and had, as the women's movement argued, such important implications for national efficiency, then it could no longer be responsibly left to servants. The women's section of the Liberal Association in Sydney predicted all women would eventually do their own housework,

\(^{60}\) Holman, 'Life Without Servants', p. 7.

\(^{61}\) National Council of Women, Victoria, Minutes, May 1921.
... instead of leaving the work to some unwilling, unintelligent creature who does her work grudgingly. Housework will be done without tears as soon as women realise its importance in the scheme of things.62

While most women's organisations continued to support schemes designed to import servants from Britain they also indicated their awareness that many women would have to rely either partially or permanently upon their own domestic labour. In 1929 the NSW Housewives' Association launched a Girls' Progressive Club to 'promote home life and happiness ... (for) the younger business or home women'.63 Lectures were delivered to these young women on the complexities of 'time and money management' and the potential replacement of servants by 'labor-saving' devices64. Membership lists indicate that Girls' Progressive Club members were often daughters and relatives of members of the Housewives' Association. The mothers might have home 'help' but the daughters were being prepared for the 'servantless home'. No doubt they agreed with Florence Taylor, Australia's first woman architect and civil engineer, when she said that,

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64. Stead's Review, 1 March 1929, p. 34; Sydney Opinion, 1 March 1930, p. 61.
Retrogression is impossible ... we cannot expect educated ... women to go back to the laborious and menial tasks that the former servant class has discarded.65

As was the case in their approach to the question of the status of domestic labour, domestic science experts and their supporters in the women's movement turned to the world of science and industry for solutions to this problem. As the theories and processes of mass-production streamlined industry, so the home, it was suggested, could be modernised to 'save labour'. Rooms would be located to facilitate the housewife's efficient movement from task to task. Furniture would be built-in, devoid of embellishments, to minimise cleaning and dusting. Kitchen equipment would be standardised as to height and arranged to ensure maximum work with minimum effort66. The servant's room would of course disappear. The Housewives' Association took an active part in encouraging the new functional home. In 1923 the Victorian executive judged over 450 entries by women in a competition run by the Herald to design a 'labor-saving bungalow'67.


67. Brookes papers, 38/59; For the extent to which these changes were echoed in architects' plans and home building in the 1920s see Reiger, 'The Disenchantment of the Home', pp. 100-02.
The stream-lined modern home still had to be cleaned and its inhabitants serviced. 'Scientific management' had not solved these problems. The point of Frederick Taylor's management science was to concentrate planning and intellectual skills in management - to separate planning from execution. The manager would scientifically develop, plan and supervise the labour while the worker would do the tasks according to the method deemed most efficient by the supervisor. These benefits would be lost in the one-woman home for there the 'average housewife' was 'manageress, overseer, domestic servant, and jack-of-all domestic trades'.

Though Florence Taylor, publisher of The Commonwealth Home and an assiduous publiciser of the 'servantless home', assured her readers that women would become managers of machines it remained that the labour of the housewife was required to operate the machine: the housewife did the work of the process worker and the manager. Few homes were well supplied with electrical equipment in the 1920s but women eagerly looked forward to 'lifting the drudgery' through electricity. At the inaugural conference of the CWA Emily Munro named the extension of the electricity supply to country areas as a priority reform. Women's organisations helped to

68. *The Commonwealth Home*, 7 September 1926, p. 44.


71. *Argus*, 19 April 1922, p. 7; *Sydney Stock and Station Journal*, 28 April 1922, p. 2; *2 May 1922.*
consolidate the gradually developing demand for electrical products and services. The Housewives' Associations held demonstrations and organised home exhibitions which featured brand-name equipment and lectures by 'experts' supplied by the manufacturers\textsuperscript{72}. In 1934 the Association was involved in promoting an Electrical Association for Women. It was founded by Mrs F.V. McKenzie, reputedly Australia's only female licensed electrical contractor, to advise women on the purchase and safe use of electrical appliances\textsuperscript{73}. Factory visits were arranged and demonstrations staged on the use of various appliances for cooking, cleaning and lighting. The Housewives' Association made its lecture rooms available to the Australian Gas Light Company, the Electricity Department of the Sydney City Council and to manufacturers such as Metters and Frigidaire.

A new range of 'domestic experts' became lecturers on the new equipment. Isabel Loubser, a former nurse and hotel manager, gave a demonstration to the Girls' Progressive Club and the Feminist Club on the advantages of domestic refrigerators. Refrigerators were economic, hygienic and thrifty she said and relegated 'haphazard methods' of preparing and preserving food to the 'limbo

\textsuperscript{72} SMH, 12 September 1917, p. 5; Australian Women's National League, Baby Week Campaign, Souvenir Programme, Melbourne, 1918, p. 6; see also the reports of affiliated societies to the National Council of Women, NSW, in Biennial Reports.

\textsuperscript{73} The Housewife, Sydney, July 1935, pp. 30-31.
of sanitation and woollen petticoats. Both the women's organisations and the experts were at pains to point out that 'no element of trade enters into the lectures, which are of a purely scientific and informative nature'. Their interest lay simply in providing advice when 'every day and every year the application of science to domestic problems makes the kitchen of the housewife more and more like a laboratory'. However, some of the more extravagant claims of the manufacturers and their 'sales experts' were sanctioned. The new 'labor-saving devices' would be the

... domestic help who can be engaged at a lesser wage than her human prototype; her wage indeed becoming proportionately lower with her increased use and popularity, unlike the services of manual labour which increases in scarcity and price as soon as the demand rises.

Operating a servantless home with the aid of technology would result in more leisure time. The housewife would no longer need to supervise the servant's work. Instead, with a kitchen full of obedient 'domestic slaves' she could be

Away for the whole afternoon, but [have] dinner at 6 as usual - No, not tied down in a hot kitchen - a veritable household slave, but FREE FOR THE WHOLE AFTERNOON.

74. Loubser was employed by Warburton Franki Ltd, the Sydney agents for the Frigidaire Corporation of America. Sydney Opinion, 1 March 1930, p. 61.

75. Ibid.


77. Advertisement for cooking appliances in The Housewife, Melbourne, 5 September 1929, p. 4. Their emphasis.
For most women the 'promise' of domestic technology remained just that in the 1920s. The new household technology required a larger capital investment than most working-class families and many middle-class families could afford. From the comments of technology advocates it would also seem that men - the controllers of family income - did not always accept the need to replace the wife's physical labour with machine power. Consumer durables such as radios and cars and commercially organised recreation were making inroads into family budgets but many men considered it natural for women to labour at home. Domestic reformers supplied women with a stream of arguments with which to loosen the family purse. Florence Taylor, although agreeing that 'initial cost of most electrical labor-saving equipment is apt to affright us' argued that if 'a woman saves her domestic servant's wages she is not only entitled to this £52 spent on electrical or other labor saving devices for one year, but for every year she does without her maid'.

The aspirations and expectations which the new domestic technology fueled among the middle class and the upwardly mobile working-class woman should not be underestimated. If servants were scarce, ill-trained or too costly, domestic machinery promised a satisfying

78. See list of appliances and estimated costs in 'The Conquest of Housework. A Practical Study of Mechanical Substitutes for Mary Jane (Deceased)', The Home, 1 December 1920, pp. 87-88; See also Andrew Spearritt, 'Electrification of the Home'.

79. The Commonwealth Home, 1 September 1926, p. 44.
alternative. Yet 'labor-saving' machines and methods were not without their detractors. A number of domestic reformers pointed out the basic illogicality of many of the claims made for domestic technology and scientific home management. No matter how much science and technology was applied to the contemporary home, its scale and labour force precluded the rationalisation of housework and the liberation of the housewife as the techniques were not applicable to the lone woman worker in the private household. The housewife could not, as in business, take on the management of an ever-increasing number of households. Mary Moss of the Housewives' Association commented,

[The housewife] is not a trained expert - far from it - and never can be while she confines herself to serving one household; she does not handle quantities sufficient nor cater for a large number of people to gain expert knowledge of her business. Her purchasing power is so small that the seller, knowing he has ignorance and a small purse to deal with, acts accordingly.

Moss recognised that domestic science education was not transforming women into experts or professionals: rather, the housewife was becoming the disciple of other experts, male and female, in the burgeoning domestic and child sciences. She was not gaining the authority and control originally envisaged by the domestic science advocates but instead was increasingly at the mercy of standards set outside her realm with little regard for her material conditions.

80. e.g. Hilda Vane, 'Group Co-operation for Women - A Suggestion from Utopia', The Lone Hand, 1 April 1920, p. 28.

81. Mary Moss, 'Domestic Foundations of the New Age - Communal Kitchens', Herself, 1 November 1928, p. 11.
A few radical women took the argument to the logical conclusion that the only solution was to free the woman from the obligations of the home. If the 'trend of life to-day is towards specialisation, towards the development of the expert' and the 'work in the home is judged by the standard set in factories where the division of labour obtains' why not, they argued, deprivatise the home. Its tasks could be communalised and placed under the control of trained female domestic experts. In such a way the burden of drudgery and routine would be lifted from the shoulders of the individual housewife. 'With no kitchens to bind her' the housewife could leave cooking and feeding to the experts and 'get on with [her] important job of "mothering" the community'. Cooperative kitchens and laundries would free women to join men in production. Scope would be given to careers for trained women as domestic specialists and national efficiency would be assured.

As early as 1899 the National Council of Women of NSW had discussed the wisdom of co-operative housekeeping. In that year Rose Scott read a paper prepared by Bertha McNamara on a scheme to provide communal facilities for working mothers. In 1909 the Victorian National Council of Women debated the concept that 'Co-operation would do away with the drudgery of domestic

83. *Herself*, November 1928, p. II.
life. The 'National Kitchens' and communal laundries established in Britain during the war revived interest in the communalisation of domestic tasks. In 1920 the Housewives' Association of NSW set up an experimental communal kitchen, as part of a display for 'Baby Week', which provoked much interest. There were suggestions that the Housewives' Association pioneer permanent communal kitchens to promote national health. In Melbourne, the National Council of Women appointed a committee to consider establishing central kitchens and a home delivery service for hot meals on a non-profit basis. The committee passed the issue to the Victorian Housewives' Association but nothing eventuated. Rather than actively encourage moves towards co-operative housekeeping the various Housewives' Associations harnessed the spirit of co-operation in Association-sponsored talks for domestic appliances and products. In 1923 the Housewives' Association of Victoria arranged, in conjunction with the Australian General Electric Company, a demonstration at the Independent Hall of the uses of electricity in the home, where '200 women watched half a dozen young men do the day's housework in the way it should be done."

89. *Argus*, 1 June 1921, p. 4; National Council of Women, Victoria, Minutes, 30 June 1921; 25 August 1921.
The men cooked afternoon teas, demonstrated electric carpet cleaners and washing machines, wringers, irons and dishwashers. The message conveyed was 'almost irresistible' and certainly illusory. The co-operation of half a dozen young men to complete the household chores obscured the fact that it would be the isolated woman in the home, the 'average housewife', who had first to acquire the machines and then, to operate them herself.

Organisations like the Housewives' Association ensured that the new technology and knowledge generated by industry and science were used in a very specific and limited way rather than to communalise or de-privatisé domestic tasks and the consumption of services and goods. Although the initial effect of the gradual diffusion of industry's products in the home was to remove some of the heavier domestic burdens from the housewife it did not alleviate her responsibilities. In formulating a role for women as consumers and domestic workers the Housewives' Association did not deviate from a belief in the value of the private, female-staffed home. The Association increasingly emphasised 'efficient' spending rather than saving as the housewife's primary role. It looked at the communalisation of domestic tasks but realised that the co-operative purchase of appliances and products, although admirable in principle, would not serve the manufacturers whose interests the Association linked to the well-being of the domestic economy. The lone housewife, isolated in her home and
performing her own domestic tasks, meant a greater demand for labor-saving devices and mass-produced products and it was in the confines of the private household that the woman could demonstrate that level of efficiency and dutiful application to domesticity that underlay her claims for increased protection, representation and consideration.

By the end of the decade the image of the 'average housewife' had been consolidated. As projected by the Housewives' Association and its domestic science allies, this ideal home-maker shared aspirations and standards with other housewives across class. Compelled by notions of love and duty, the housewife laboured efficiently in the home to ensure the health and happiness of her family by using 'labor-saving devices' and applying the expertise bestowed on her by a training in 'scientific housewifery'. Economical in her ways, she was able to balance her budget and adapt the notion of 'thrift' to the need to up-date household equipment. She arranged her budget in line with the directives of a range of 'experts' in industry and in the domestic and child sciences. Finally, she took her role as housewife seriously and looked to extending her own knowledge and skills as a 'professional housewife' to the public field.

In response to the application of science and technology to the home the standards of household efficiency rose, some domestic functions expanded and
others were introduced into the housewife's repertoire. Rising standards of efficiency were produced partly by the changing material conditions of industrial life but were also promoted quite consciously by the ideology of the domestic science movement. Its advocates sought to justify the removal of many of woman's traditional productive tasks into mass commodity production and to legitimise for women an equally important economic role as society's consumers. At the same time, by borrowing from the management techniques and scientific principles of industry, they set standards which were ultimately unattainable for women in the privatised, small-scale, Australian home. An even wider market was created for industry as housewives strove for recognition as domestic 'experts' by purchasing recommended products and services to enhance their activities as domestic workers and mothers.
CHAPTER SIX
MANAGING MOTHERHOOD

No longer is the child's future to be allowed to depend merely upon the care and intelligence, or lack of both, of its parents; but every public body - nay, even every individual - is to share the responsibility of securing for that child a fair start upon the great highway of life.¹

The mother is nature's guardian of her child ... society only wishes to make her more efficient, but in no way to intrude between her and her sacred trust.²

One important ingredient was missing from the domestic science recipe for the efficient home. The educated housewife might be a diligent cleaner, consumer and manager of the household, yet she did not fulfil her national duty unless she also produced and successfully reared the next generation. By the 1910s the primacy originally given to the task of increasing the birth-rate was overshadowed by a concern to ensure the survival of those infants already born and even more importantly, the optimum health of those surviving the vulnerable infant years. While domestic science education implicitly acknowledged the importance of efficient home management in preserving infant and child health, the detailed

¹ Souvenir of 1st N.S.W. Baby Week Campaign and Programme of Mothercraft and Child Welfare Exhibition, Sydney, 1920, p. 11.
² Ibid., p. 13.
instructions given on cleaning, cooking, laundering and shopping stopped short in regard to the intricacies of child-rearing. Yet just as aspiring domestic scientists attempted to bring a measure of rationality and scientific knowledge to the organisation and performance of household work, mothering was also increasingly depicted as work which required a special, scientifically-based training.

In 1907 courses in infant hygiene were introduced for girls at selected inner-city schools by the NSW Department of Public Instruction but for the most part the responsibility for educating women in their roles as mothers fell outside the public education system. By the 1920s this area of work was considered 'the peculiar province of trained nurses, doctors and public-spirited women'. While the predominantly male medical profession played a crucial role in developing 'scientific' child-care techniques it was largely educated women such as trained nurses, women doctors and voluntary welfare workers, who brought new techniques of infant care to other women, instilling in them a desire for supervision in the private arena of mothering. The site for imparting this knowledge and desire was the baby clinic. In 1914 the NSW government took over the administration of several existing 'Schools for Mothers' in inner Sydney and began providing grants


and subsidies to local communities to establish baby health centres in other areas. Following this initiative the Victorian government in 1918 began subsidising baby health centres. Women were encouraged to attend the centres where nursing staff trained in the medical mysteries of 'mothercraft' taught mothers the rules of personal hygiene and how to maintain and improve the health of their infants. The women's organisations which sponsored these programs envisaged the fruits of this innovation to be not only the saving of infant life and improvements in maternal health but a greatly enhanced status for motherhood and expanded career opportunities for a range of women workers. The achievement of these goals depended on the acceptance by women, whether mothers or infant welfare workers, of the mothercraft message with its implicit supervisory role for the medical profession. For the lone mother it also meant maintaining an exacting standard of maternal care and domestic hygiene regardless of personal sacrifice.

The Education of Mothers: A Female Province?

There are many wrongs to be righted, and mistakes to be rectified, which mothers and medical women are better able to understand and cope with, than all our National Parliaments, Trades Halls, Conclaves of Bishops, Benches of Judges, 5 and "all sorts and conditions of men" ...

In April 1918, as the Allies reeled from the impact of a successful German offensive, the women's movement in Australia turned its face away from the slaughter in Europe and towards the needs of the next generation. In Melbourne, amidst a fanfare of publicity, the Australian Women's National League in cooperation with the National Council of Women staged 'Baby Week'. To the critics who claimed that their effort detracted from the more patriotic war work these women replied that the battle to preserve infant life was woman's concern:

While women are powerless to arrest the terrific slaughter on the battlefield of Right versus Might; they are not equally powerless to save the lives of Australian Babies which are being sacrificed every year in greater proportion than the lives of our young manhood on active service in Europe!\(^6\)

The National Councils of Women made this battle peculiarly their own and the enthusiastic response of a wide range of individual women and their organisations strengthened their resolve. In 1916 over fifty-eight societies were affiliated to the Victorian National Council of Women representing 160,000 women\(^7\). Thirty of these affiliates provided exhibits, demonstrations and lectures for 'Baby Week' and the Australian Women's National League, the largest of the Council's affiliates, gave financial

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and administrative help to ensure its success. The main theme of the 'Week' was 'how ill-prepared most women are' for the duties of motherhood. Participants agreed that the maternal instinct was no longer enough to ensure infant survival. Instinct made women capable of great endurance and self-sacrifice for their children but the death-rate among infants proved something more was required. The missing factor was education in line with the advances being made by the medical and allied professions.

In the Melbourne Town Hall during 'Baby Week' the National Council of Women mounted a lantern-slide show dealing with the 'Hun-enemy of infant life - THE FLY', a presentation procured by its President Alice Baker on a trip to America. The Kindergarten Union and the Victorian Creches' Association ran working models of their centres and the Housewives' Association, the School of Domestic Economy and the League of Honour staged demonstrations and staffed exhibits dealing with home hygiene and efficient home management. Medical women and trained nurses played a major part in these activities, their veils and uniforms conveying strongly the arrival

8. The Woman, April 1918, p. 85.
10. The Woman, April 1918, p. 85.
of an age of professionalism to a traditionally female domain. Much of the initial inspiration for the staging of 'Baby Week' came from women doctors prominent in National Council of Women affairs. Dr Constance Ellis addressed the Australian Women's National League in 1917 on the subject of infant welfare. With Drs Jean Greig and Isabel Young, Ellis formed a sub-committee of the Victorian Medical Women's Association to arrange lectures by medical women and prominent male specialists. During 'Baby Week' the lectures by Dr Jean Greig on 'Defective Children', Dr Helen Kelsey on the 'Bacteriology of Milk', Dr Edith Barrett on 'Neglected Children' and Dr Margaret Bailey on 'A Healthy Baby, the Nation's Best Asset' reportedly drew standing-room only crowds. At the same time nurses from the Women's Hospital demonstrated the washing and dressing of the new-born baby, the Adelaide School for Mothers and matrons and nurses from the Victorian baby clinics distributed pamphlets on breast-feeding, weighed up to fifty babies a day and advised on feeding. Delegates from the Visiting Trained Nurses' Association and the Melbourne District Nursing Society demonstrated the correct care of invalids and the hygienic standards required in the sick room and nurses

12. Photographs of the exhibits and their uniformed attendants were published in The Woman, May 1918.


from the Foundling Hospital and Infants' Home, the
Children's Hospital and the Victorian Association of
Creches demonstrated approved ways of feeding, clothing
and soothing their small charges.\textsuperscript{15}

The enthusiastic involvement of women doctors
and trained nurses in the staging of 'Baby Week' clearly
reflected their commitment to this movement. It also
marked their aspirations as professionals to control an
area of work which would enable them to assert independent
expertise while satisfying existing social expectations
for women. The Australasian Trained Nurses' Association
and the Royal Victorian Trained Nurses' Association had
been initiated by male doctors and doctors continued to
fill most of the executive positions on their governing
councils\textsuperscript{16}. Trained in public hospitals the nurse learnt
'without ever putting it into definite words that she
must obey the physicians' orders unquestioningly' and that
'the sole purpose of the nurse's training was to fit her
for the faithful execution of the physician's orders.'\textsuperscript{17}
The expansion of opportunities for nurses to be 'apostles'
of public health in schemes outside the confines of the
hospital attracted favourable attention from many within
the ranks of the trained nurse.\textsuperscript{18} Dr Constance Ellis,

\textsuperscript{15} The Woman, May 1918, p. 113, p. 130.

\textsuperscript{16} See the Annual Reports of the Australasian Trained

\textsuperscript{17} Australasian Nurses' Journal, 15 March 1918, pp. 100-01.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 15 March 1918, pp. 101, 104.
lecturing during 'Baby Week' on New York's Baby Health Stations, drew particular attention to the fact that public health nurses and not doctors were the key figures in New York's child welfare system. At the Baby Health Stations nurses ran milk depots and dispensed antenatal and child-care advice. They visited the homes of expectant mothers before, during and after child-birth, referring women in need of relief to other voluntary and professional women's organisations and social welfare agencies. Infant welfare programs of this nature excited the aspirations of Australian women reformers. They found favour not only with the wide range of services offered to mothers and children but with the co-operative relationship apparent between public health nurses and voluntary welfare workers in Settlement Houses and other community projects in America's ghettos.

NSW took an early lead in the provision of infant and maternal welfare services. In 1903 the Sydney City Council began distributing baby health circulars to mothers of new born infants in inner-city suburbs. Soon after, nurses were employed as 'lady sanitary inspectors' to visit and instruct poorer mothers in their homes. On the initiative of the National Council of Women the Alice Rawson School for Mothers was established at Darlinghurst in 1909 to instruct mothers attending the


clinic and to make follow-up visits to their homes. The Alice Rawson nurses encouraged mothers to breast-feed but if natural feeding was impossible they provided nutritious and hygienic substitutes for the mother's milk. In 1912 a branch was opened in Newtown\textsuperscript{21} and in 1914 the Alice Rawson Schools and the City Council's home visiting scheme were absorbed into a state-run system of clinics. The Government's actions removed the financial burden from the National Council and implied some acknowledgement that the state had a duty to protect mothers and infants. It also ensured the centralisation of power and policy-making in the hands of public health officials and the medical profession. Neither the National Council nor any of its affiliates were represented on the Board appointed to oversee the Baby Clinics\textsuperscript{22}.

Three years later in Victoria, a group of National Council of Women affiliates, including the Melbourne District Nursing Society, the Victorian Ladies' Benevolent Society, the Association of Creches, the Victorian Medical Women's Society and the Australian Women's National League, asked for Government support for Baby Clinics to be established and run by the Melbourne District Nursing Society\textsuperscript{23}. A sub-committee set up by

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21. Cowden, 'Mothers As a Rule', pp. 53-64; Alice Rawson School for Mothers, Annual Reports, 1911-1914.

22. Cowden, 'Mothers As a Rule', pp. 74-76; Thame, 'Health and the State', p. 208.

23. Argus, 21 March 1917, p. 9. The women's organisations favoured a clinic system which dealt with pregnant women, mothers and children up to five years of age. They suggested the clinics should provide advice and treatment with subsidised milk depots and free dispensaries. Argus, 16 August 1917, p. 6.
the government to consider this and other proposals included a representative of the British Medical Association and Drs Isabel Younger, Constance Ellis and Edith Barrett. The medical members of the sub-committee preferred to see a clinic system staffed by trained nurses and under the direct control of paid medical officers\textsuperscript{24}. From 1918 the government offered funds to local councils for clinics administered in line with the recommendations of the doctors. A largely voluntary organisation, the Victorian Baby Health Centre Association, was established to coordinate policy between clinics and to help extend their numbers.

The medical profession reacted quickly to the decision of the state to fund baby clinics. Local branches of the British Medical Association voted to obstruct clinic formation unless services were restricted to monitoring health and offering advice and the nursing staff were under the control of doctors\textsuperscript{25}. The Government and local public health officials bowed to the will of this increasingly powerful lobby group. Clinic services in both states were restricted and treatment of sick or expectant mothers removed from the clinic sister's role. Illness and other complications were passed on to the hospital or the local doctor 'as it was no part of the

\textsuperscript{24} Argus, 16 August 1917, p. 6; SMH, 15 August 1917, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{25} Medical Journal of Australia, 1 January 1916, p. 84; 25 November 1916, pp. 462-63; 7 April 1917, pp. 287-91.
functions of the Baby Clinics to treat disease. Each clinic was staffed by two nurses. One worked on the premises; the other, who was advised of the names and addresses of all newly-born babies by the District Registrar, visited homes. When a doctor attended the birth the clinic sister delayed her visit until the doctor left the case. If the mother was attended by a midwife only, the clinic nurse took no such precautions to avoid offending professional sensibilities and visited the home immediately. Mothers were encouraged to attend the clinic on a regular basis though the clinic sister was forbidden to provide treatment or services in competition with doctors or to offer controversial opinions which might contradict the diagnosis of the patient's local practitioner. The sister could only offer basic mothercraft advice. To ensure the supply of clinic nurses schooled to act as adjuncts to the medical profession and to offer the correct line in advice, centralised training schemes were established. In 1920, in Sydney, the 'Tresillian' Mothercraft Training School was opened offering a three-month post-graduate course for certificated nurses and accommodation for mothers and babies with feeding problems. By 1923 all nurses appointed to the NSW clinic system were required to hold a Tresillian certificate and the clinics were visited weekly by honorary physicians.


Victoria the continued opposition of doctors to the clinic system resulted in their refusal to allow the appointment of honorary physicians. From 1920 Victorian clinics were forced to share the services of one full-time medical officer, Dr Vera Scantlebury.29

There was another side to the clinic movement. The long-standing involvement of the National Councils and their affiliates in charitable works ensured that they were aware that environmental and economic conditions as well as maternal knowledge influenced the infant mortality rates. Infant deaths may have resulted from improper feeding or infection from unhygienic feeding bottles but this death rate was linked to other factors often beyond the reach of individual mothers. The women reformer's knowledge of the overwhelming disadvantages of poor housing, faulty sanitation, impure water and milk supplies and high food prices modified their perspective on the effectiveness of education. Before the war the nurses of the Alice Rawson Schools for Mothers pointed out to the National Council that poor mothers encountered special difficulties in establishing and maintaining lactation and in ensuring the home was hygienic. Mothers often could not afford the food, kitchen implements and fuel to carry out the nurse's advice.30 Dr Edith Barrett noted how often her advice only served to place an additional

load on the already over-burdened mother. One solution she suggested was to recruit volunteer 'Mother's Aids' to take over the household duties of the woman with a new infant. Others noted the problem of providing pure, clean milk. The National Council's efforts to combat the effects of an impure milk supply predated the formation of a clinic movement. In Victoria in 1908 the Lady Talbot Infant Milk Dispensary had been opened but it was plagued by financial difficulties and periodically lost its government and local council subsidies. When first considering infant welfare in the early 1900s the NSW National Council of Women had planned to establish a pure milk depot on English lines. This enterprise was not pursued, on the grounds of cost, and instead the Alice Rawson School was opened.

Despite the limited services and purview of the clinics their establishment was seen by many women reformers as a substantial victory. The clinic system was partially funded by the state and seemed a promising indication of the state's gradual acceptance of its responsibility not only for the health of children but for the protection of women in their national duty as

31. The Woman, March 1918, pp. 23, 34.
34. Cowden, 'Mothers As a Rule', pp. 56-60.
mothers. The rhetoric of clinic supporters was replete with paens to motherhood, comparing their 'desperate travails and suffering' in child-birth and child-rearing to the sacrifices of the Anzacs. The appointment of Dr Vera Scantlebury in Victoria and Dr Margaret Harper in NSW to administrative positions within the clinic systems was seen as an indication that this work would eventually be recognised as a female province. In NSW the women's movement had further cause to feel optimistic. In 1918 the Royal Society for the Welfare of Mothers and Babies took over responsibility for the clinics. The Society's objects reflected the diversity of its participating groups and included the establishment of rest homes for expectant and new mothers, the provision of milk depots and schemes to arrest venereal disease, alcoholism and mental deficiency. The organising committee of the Royal Society included women representatives from the Sydney Day Nursery Association, the Kindergarten Union, the Infant's Home at Ashfield, the Salvation Army Maternity Home, the St John's Ambulance Association, the Health Society and the Women's Reform League, which were all affiliates of the National Council of Women of NSW. In 1921 the Royal Society also affiliated to the

35. e.g. see Sidney Innes Noad, President of the Royal Society, in Australian National Review, 24 January 1922, p. 6.

36. Dr Margaret Harper (1879-1964) was appointed medical director of the Royal Society's Mothercraft Homes and Training Schools in 1919. See Victoria Cowden, 'Margaret Hilda Harper', ADB, Vol. 9.

37. Woman's Voice, November 1918, p. 10.
Women's Council\textsuperscript{38}.

**An Epidemic of Ignorance: Mothercraft as a Mass Movement**

Where babies do badly there is almost always a history of serious but easily avoidable mistakes ... these are just as likely to occur among the educated and well-to-do as among the so-called poor and ignorant.\textsuperscript{39}

The NSW clinic system was the model for the establishment and extension of similar networks in other parts of Australia. In turn it was strongly influenced by the teaching methods and aims of the New Zealand Society for the Health of Women and Children which was formed in 1907 by Dr Frederick Truby King under Lady Plunket's patronage,

to inculcate a lofty view of the responsibilities of maternity and the duty of every mother to fit herself for the perfect fulfilment of the natural calls of motherhood ...\textsuperscript{40}

It became known as the Plunket Society and under the strict direction of Truby King rapidly established a string of clinics staffed by specially trained 'Plunket' nurses. The low mortality rate of New Zealand infants coupled with Truby King's own assertive public personality

\begin{itemize}
  \item[38.] NSW Baby Week Souvenir, 1920, p. 7; National Council of Women, NSW, Minutes, 26 May 1921.
  \item[39.] Stella Pines, 'Mothercraft', Australasian Nurses' Journal, 15 November 1924, p. 558.
\end{itemize}
ensured that his methods quickly gained international recognition. In 1919 the Royal Society for the Welfare of Mothers and Babies sent Dr Margaret Harper to New Zealand to observe the clinic system and her report influenced the decision to establish the Training School for clinic sisters at Petersham. In this period the clinic programs in New Zealand and Australia were similar in that they concentrated on the encouragement of breast-feeding and the provision of advice on hygienic and nutritious substitutes when breast-milk failed. On one point alone was there a significant divergence.

By 1920 clinics were operating in the most congested industrial suburbs such as Richmond, Port Melbourne, Carlton, Collingwood, Fitzroy and Geelong in Melbourne and in Alexandria, Paddington, Balmain, Chippendale, Glebe, St Peters, Pyrmont, Woolloomooloo and Newtown in Sydney. The clinic movement in Australia selected 'poor and crowded localities' as sites for their services. Poverty and ignorance were seen as inextricably linked. Education in hygiene and breast-feeding, an emphasis on the need for sensible clothes and diet for mother and child and the rejection of the use of patent medicines, purgatives and pacifiers, it was hoped would enable the less privileged mother to surmount the

41. Ibid.

42. Argus, 27 September 1919, p. 20; NSW Baby Week Souvenir, p. 21.
difficulties of her environment. With an educated knowledge of infant and child needs the mother could also encourage the reallocation of resources within the family to satisfy the minimum standards for the health of her child. While mothercraft instruction inevitably implied some devaluation of the knowledge working-class women learnt from other women, the focus on these mothers allowed for some consideration of additional factors in infant deaths such as poor diet and insanitary living conditions.

Truby King rejected the notion that poverty was an important factor in the loss of infant life. In an early address to the Imperial Health Conference in London he said that he had 'given poverty no first place in the marring of infant, though poverty is usually placed in the forefront. Instead, he isolated the 'want of training' and preparation of the body and mind of the mother - the mother's unpreparedness and ignorance - as the prime factors in the failure of our children. This dangerous want of knowledge 'was not confined to one class, but was found in all ranks of society.' While the clinic movement in NSW and Victoria concentrated on educating mothers whose poverty placed their infants at risk from the outset, Truby King espoused the need for all mothers to receive this education and supervision.

43. Austral-Briton, 31 August 1917, p. 12.


45. SMH, 8 August 1917, p. 5.
To reach this wider audience Truby King's followers in Australia began to establish their own clinics, firstly in Melbourne where a clinic run on Truby King lines was opened in Coburg in 1919\textsuperscript{46}. In NSW Dr Margaret Harper, the medical director of the Tresillian Training School, found the rigidity of King's feeding programme unacceptable and his formulas too high in fat and began experiments with alternative feeding systems. Truby King responded by forming the rival Australian Mothercraft Society in 1923. Elizabeth McMillan, a Plunket-trained nurse who was matron of Tresillian for fourteen months, became its first director. McMillan was not only opposed to modifications to formulas to 'suit the climate'\textsuperscript{47} but she upheld the autonomy of Plunket nurses\textsuperscript{48}. In Victoria Truby King established the Society for the Health of Women and Children. He maintained that the reason for the success of his movements was that the work was 'entirely in the hands of women'\textsuperscript{49}. He promised to 'make the mother a competent executive in her own home'\textsuperscript{50} and he relied on local committees of women to administer clinics and to disseminate knowledge. Dr

\textsuperscript{46} Argus, 5 December 1919, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{47} Herself, 17 September 1929, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{48} SMH, 23 October 1925, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{49} His emphasis, Herself, 17 September 1928, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{50} SMH, 23 October 1925, p. 10.
Purdy, Metropolitan Officer of Health in Sydney, condemned the system to the National Council of Women in Health Week, 1925. Mothercraft instruction, Purdy said, was 'for medical men to deal with, and not laymen'.

Yet Truby King paid no special compliment to the intelligence of the middle class mother and female organiser. He merely conceded that 'if properly taught' these women would 'soon spread the contagion of their knowledge' until the 'new fashion' caught on.

While women's organisations continued to lobby for increased facilities to protect poorer mothers and their infants, their own support of the clinic movement and its mothercraft rules paradoxically served to obscure the critical link between women's economic insecurity and infant mortality. The mothercraft rules disseminated by the clinics dealt primarily with the practical, common sense details of caring for the infant and maintaining a hygienic home environment. A list of instructions reproduced in the souvenir programme of the first NSW 'Baby Week' in 1920 counselled mothers to keep the home airy and clean, to bathe the baby daily, to dress themselves and their infants sensibly and to avoid the use of patent medicines and rubber pacifiers. The over-riding concern of the movement, however, was to encourage mothers to breast feed their infants in order

51. Ibid., 20 October 1925, p. 8.
52. Victoria League, Imperial Health Conference, p. 211.
53. NSW Baby Week Souvenir, p. 27.
to avoid the dangers of summer diarohhea. The clinics assumed that the 'fertility of this State and the general prosperity of its people ensure that, with very few exceptions, mothers can nurse their own babies'\textsuperscript{54}. It was taken for granted that all mothers were able to procure the ordinary wholesome food and fluids, fresh air and exercise, and suitable conditions to avoid worry, overwork and fatigue, during pregnancy and while nursing, to ensure ample milk for the infant\textsuperscript{55}. While detailed instructions on artificial formulas were available to mothers whose milk failed, the clinics worked to create an 'atmosphere ... in which a mother is almost ashamed to have to admit that her baby is not naturally fed'\textsuperscript{56}.

In the process of asserting the superior knowledge of the medical expert the clinic movement added the weight of moral authority to their scientific directives to mothers to breast feed. The Royal Society complained that if only

\begin{quote}
... women recognised that it is morally inexcusable to feed a baby artificially, save under exceptional circumstances, there would be an enormous saving of tears at the grave-side.\textsuperscript{57}
\end{quote}

Breast feeding, apart from offering a sterile food for the infant, promoted a closely dependent relationship between the mother and her infant. In this way a woman was

\begin{enumerate}
\item[A54.]\textit{Argus}, 24 April 1918, p. 12.
\item[A55.]\textit{NSW Baby Week Souvenir}, p. 34.
\item[A56.]\textit{Australasian Nurses' Journal}, June 1920, p. 194.
\item[A57.]\textit{NSW Baby Week Souvenir}, p. 13.
\end{enumerate}
trained to meet the infant's needs and later those of the child, regardless of the personal sacrifice involved.

As the clinics' role became more widely appreciated, partly through the promotional activities of women's organisations, the demand for its services extended beyond working-class districts. Increasingly Truby King's contention that all mothers needed instruction in child-care was taken up by the women's movement. Addressing the National Council of Women during Health Week in 1924, Stella Pines, the Matron of Tresillian, said the mistakes made by mothers in ministering to their offspring were 'just as likely to occur among the educated and well-to-do as among the so-called poor and ignorant.' Lists of mothercraft 'Dos and Don'ts' began to appear frequently in the more prestigious women's magazines. The Australian Women's National League introduced a 'Mother's Medical Column' in The Woman and paid a member of the Victorian Medical Women's Association to reply to queries about the health and feeding of infants.

Middle-class mothers were predisposed to support and attend clinic sessions. These women had a background of long-term support for scientific instruction in domestic matters seeing it as an important tool in legitimising their demand that such work be recognised as nationally important and technically exacting. Married

to professional men or often professionally trained themselves, 'modern mothers' shared common attitudes and values with the professionally oriented medical experts. They also possessed economic resources and the secure home environment which facilitated the application of mothercraft advice. Suburban committees of 'public-spirited women' were encouraged to seek the assistance of local government in providing clinic premises which residents would equip and maintain. The state arranged the appointment of a clinic sister and supervision by the local Medical Officer. The established women's organisation network helped raise funds and rally public support for the establishment of clinics. Martha Dennis, the wife of a prominent Northcote City Councillor, drew on her considerable contacts with local authorities and her extensive executive positions on the district's Hospital Auxiliary, Dorcas Society, Creche Association, Australian Women's National League branch and Trained Nurses' Association, as well as her influence in the National Council of Women, to form Northcote's first Baby Health Centre in the 1920s. In NSW the Women's Union of Service, which normally concentrated on the education of women in non-party politics, took a lead by furnishing female organisers to promote clinic construction and petition for additional funding. The National Council of Women staged an infant welfare conference in


61. National Council of Women, NSW, Biennial Reports, 1925-26, pp. 33-34.
1925 at which Dr Grace Boelke, Dr Margaret Harper and Nurse Williams from the State Baby Clinics lectured on mothercraft. Following the conference a women's deputation to the Minister for Health raised the problem of the milk supply, the appointment of a Royal Commission on infant and maternal mortality and the need for compulsory training of midwifery nurses in mothercraft. In line with their new vision of baby clinics as vehicles for public health, rather than isolated services to disadvantaged mothers, the National Council of Women also proposed that clinic construction be mandatory for local councils and that responsibility for clinic administration be placed with the Director General of Public Health.\(^\text{62}\)

Although the mothercraft movement was initially city-based it spread rapidly into country areas. In Victoria the Women's Section of the Victorian Farmers' Union and the Australian Women's National League lobbied successfully for the training of bush nurses in mothercraft and helped found and fund Baby Clinics in country centres.\(^\text{63}\) In Bendigo the local branch of the Australian Women's National League held a successful 'Baby Day' with fetes and contests to raise funds for a new Baby Health Centre and to attract interest for this innovation.\(^\text{64}\) In NSW the CWA took a militant attitude towards the health of country women and children urging its members to remember that 'motherhood meant more to the future of

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62. Ibid., p. 5; SMH, 20 October 1925, p. 8.
63. Argus, 1 September 1922, p. 12; The Woman, June 1920, p. 95; January 1922, p. 331.
64. The Woman, June 1923, p. 113.
Australia than all the political trick talk of profits, overseas immigration schemes and frenzied union agitation. Its branches, which extended across the state, raised funds for the establishment of hospitals, maternity wards, women's rest-rooms and holiday homes, ambulance services and Bush Nursing Stations.

From the outset the CWA maintained that all women needed to be taught to be good mothers and that existing ignorance was compounded by the effects of isolation. The Association lobbied for the establishment of clinics in every country centre and the extension of medical facilities and bush nursing stations to remote areas. Emily Munro, the President of the Association, had herself lost an infant under twelve months of age and she became an influential CWA delegate to the Royal Society for the Welfare of Mothers and Babies from 1924. Co-operation between the CWA and the Royal Society enabled Miss Williams, the Assistant Nurse Inspector of the State Baby Clinics, to tour NSW, lecturing and demonstrating mothercraft techniques in numerous country towns. By 1934 the CWA had been instrumental in the establishment of over thirty Baby Health Centres. The Association only briefly


66. See CWA, NSW, Annual Reports and branch reports in *The Sydney Stock and Station Journal*.


considered the special needs of aboriginal women and children. At the 1928 Annual Conference the Moree branch requested more interest be taken in the welfare of aboriginal infants and their mothers. They received 'unexpected support' but were cautioned by visiting Queensland delegates of the risk of spreading infectious diseases. In this regard little was done in the 1920s as the first commitment of the Country Women's Association was to save the white babies of rural Australia.

By the mid-1920s the clinic movement in NSW and Victoria had extended beyond the heavily populated areas and into the suburbs. Between 1923 and 1926 in NSW, clinics fanned out from the inner-city regions to the more affluent northern, eastern and western suburbs. In 1926 clinics operated in Chatswood, North Sydney, Mosman, Manly, Rose Bay, Randwick, Ashfield, Burwood and Campsie. In Victoria by 1925 the Baby Health Centres Association controlled thirty clinics in the city and suburbs and twenty-two others operated independently under local council guidance or under the direction of the Victorian Society for the Health of Women and Children. The report of the Commonwealth Royal Commission on Health supplied a further stimulus to the movement. The Commissioners, drawn overwhelmingly from the medical profession, recommended that

70. SMH, 20 April 1928, p. 12.
71. Royal Society, Annual Report, 1925-26, p. 27.
the existing child welfare programs and especially the clinics, be subsidised by the federal authorities through a specially created Division of Infant and Maternal Welfare. As befit their professional interests the Commissioners reaffirmed the need for all centres and mothercraft training schools to be under strict medical supervision. Anticipating increased Commonwealth funding for infant welfare the states also set about reorganising their administration of the infant welfare area. In 1925 the NSW Government set up a Division of Infant and Maternal Welfare, within the Department of Health, under the direction of Dr E.S. Morris. The Royal Society was relieved of its responsibility for the clinics but it continued to co-ordinate the activities of child welfare agencies and to train nurses. In 1927 the society opened a second Tresillian Home at Willoughby.

With the strengthening of state control of the clinics the National Councils of Women and their affiliates became more insistent on the appointment of women to supervisory positions. In 1927 a combined women's Standing Committee on Infant and Maternal Mortality approached the State government for the appointment of more female inspectors and a woman assistant to Dr Morris. Their preference was for the appointment of an experienced married woman obstetrician, ideally a mother, to take on

74. SMH, 29 December 1927, p. 11.
the position of assistant director with responsibility for the clinic movement. In 1929, to the general satisfaction of women's organisations, Dr Elma Sandford Morgan, a former Honorary Medical Officer to Tresillian North, an executive member of the Women Voters' Association and a married woman, was appointed Assistant Director of Maternal and Baby Welfare. In Victoria Dr Vera Scantlebury and Dr Henrietta Main were commissioned by their governments to report on infant welfare. Among the many recommendations of their long and critical report were increased government subsidies and the appointment of a Medical Director of Infant Welfare within the Health Department. This position was subsequently filled by Dr Scantlebury who also became convenor of the National Council of Women Standing Committee on Health and Infant Welfare.

The pattern of infant welfare provisions in NSW and Victoria was complete by the end of the decade and little change in policy was apparent for the remainder of the inter-war years. In 1929 eighty clinics were operating in NSW and 120 in Victoria. The infant welfare movement had altered from one attending to the 'poor and ignorant mother' whose economic and environmental conditions endangered her infant, to a mass program whose influence and directives few mothers and indeed few women could avoid.

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76. e.g. see SMH, 23 October 1928, p. 6.

77. Herself, June 1930, p. 15.


The culmination of this process was reflected in a Report on Maternal and Infant Welfare prepared by Dame Janet Campbell for the Commonwealth Government in 1930. In contrast to the English situation Dame Campbell found clinics here to be

... attended by women of all social classes; there is no sharp dividing line of poverty as in England to separate the Australian mothers into different groups; it is fully recognised that the well-to-do mother is often just as much in need of advice as her poorer sister ... 80

The Message of Mothercraft

Motherhood was imbued with fresh significance in terms of racial progress and national strength in the 1920s and accorded, at least rhetorically, an elevated and respected status. The message of mothercraft was at best double-sided. The mother was 'the mainstream of the racial life' yet any respect gained depended on her 'growing knowledge and consciousness of her responsibility for the race'. 81 The ideology of motherhood constructed by the clinic movement and its supporters both promoted and diminished the importance of the mother's role. While offering numerous instructions to enable the mother to approach her duties 'scientifically', mothercraft advice stressed the essential ignorance of mothers and the importance of medical supervision. Women

81. The Woman, April 1923, p. 62.
who refused to attend a clinic or to follow the advice of the child-care experts were labelled 'refractory mothers' at whose feet was laid the responsibility for infant ill-health and deaths.  

The clinics boasted of their successes in educating women in the basic elements of infant and maternal hygiene and diet and development. Perhaps their greatest success lay in breaking down public resistance to the acceptance of medical and scientific advice in all aspects of child-birth and rearing. All women it now seemed needed instruction in the skills of mothercraft organised by 'the medical profession, because it is expert work, necessarily based on prolonged training in the medical sciences'. The mother, regardless of her own level of knowledge or standard of education, was advised to 'place herself under the care of a DOCTOR and TRAINED NURSE as early as possible' during her pregnancy. 'If baby does not seemed satisfied, or is not thriving', in cases of illness or diahorrea, if 'baby cries a great deal' or vomits, before weaning and at each stage of child development if problems arose or were indicated by the clinic sister the mother was urged not to delay but to 'consult the DOCTOR'. As women gradually accepted the need for such close medical supervision the knowledge mothers acquired from years of experience shrank in importance. The mothercraft message denigrated

82. SMH, 16 January 1927, p. 10.
83. NSW Baby Week Souvenir, p. 13.
84. Their emphasis, NSW Baby Week Souvenir, p. 2.
traditional methods of child-rearing and encouraged the break-down of networks of skill and information sharing between women. Mothers were informed that 'they need no longer listen to the "lady next door" as to how to solve any problem with which they may be faced'. Mothers were to bring up their children by the book.

In much of the material produced on mothercraft rules it was the mother who emerged as overwhelmingly responsible for and constantly in attendance upon the infant. A few observers in the 1920s appeared uneasy at the disproportionate emphasis placed on the mother's responsibility for the health and welfare of her infants. Isla Blomfield, a former Sydney municipal health inspector and a member of the Australasian Trained Nurses' Association, the Royal Society and the National Council of Women, advised that 'education for fatherhood is as essential to the race as education for motherhood'. The father had a responsibility to ensure proper emotional and economic support for the expectant or nursing mother. The average mother in the 1920s had fewer children than her mother but was expected to do more for them. If she was not breast-feeding she had to prepare infant formula under sterile conditions and according to the strict instructions of the clinic sister. The mother was required to have the baby weighed and measured

85. Ibid., p. 13.
86. I.S.B. [Isla Blomfield], 'School for Fathers', Australasian Nurses' Journal, 15 July 1921, pp. 234-35.
regularly to check that it came up to the standard. She had to prepare nutritionally balanced meals, to isolate the child if it became ill and to ensure it adhered to regular schedules to train its developing mind. Constant vigilance was required for the mother to keep up with the latest scientific pronouncements on infant needs. In 1924 the National Council of Women in Sydney made a special plea that mothers be taught correct feeding of their infants without conflicting advice\textsuperscript{87}. The Council's concern apparently arose from the continuing battle between the State clinic experts and Truby King and his supporters and demonstrates the desire of these women to adhere to the correct 'scientific' method.

While the new tasks set by mothercraft experts were not always physically burdensome they were time-consuming and required vigilance on the part of the mother. In particular the endorsement of breast feeding ensured that her role as mother would be unremitting. Neither economic necessity nor convenience were considered satisfactory reasons for abandoning this 'moral obligation' to the infant. The bond set up between mother and child was not expected to dissolve on weaning. The task of ministering to the child and of monitoring its physical and mental development did not allow for the mother to absent herself for long periods from the child. The high standards of devotion set allowed for even more rigid

\textsuperscript{87}. National Council of Women, NSW, Biennial Reports, 1923-24, p. 22.
definitions of the 'unfit' mother. To contravene expert directives could mean losing the child in custody disputes or to the state.

Mothercraft instruction in its more subtle implications measurably strengthened the long-standing prejudice against married women working in Australia. The ideal of the full-time dedicated mother extended to all women despite their economic needs or career aspirations. Its influence touched even those professional women involved in the work of educating other mothers. Dr Vera Scantlebury-Brown, on her appointment as Director of Infant and Maternal Welfare in Victoria, found that she could only take up that position on a part-time basis 'as the Health Department had a ruling that a married woman could not hold a full-time job'.\(^8^8\) Although she was appointed part-time and paid accordingly, a colleague reported that she 'worked almost twenty-four hours a day'.\(^8^9\) While part-time work of this nature and sessional work in infant welfare centres fitted in more easily with the demands of home or family it still served to retard the careers of many professional women. Dr Kate Campbell who worked with Dr Scantlebury-Brown never married and later recalled that a 'married woman in those days could not have maintained a practice and raised a family without a "stand-in". Most of the women doctors I knew did not marry'. The few with children, like Dr Scantlebury-Brown,

\(^8^8\). Patricia Grimshaw and Lynne Strahan (eds.), The Half-Open Door, Sydney, 1982.

\(^8^9\). Ibid.
'had a mother or aunt who took their place in the family', but they did not work full-time\(^9^0\).

In many ways the role played by educated mothers and voluntary women welfare workers, in alliance with nurses and women doctors, to legitimise the mothercraft message, obscured the extent to which the male-dominated medical profession increased its own influence. Mothercraft instruction, with its emphasis on the need for women to be constantly supervised in their 'natural' role of mothering, could not help but ultimately undermine the aspirations of the women's movement and its professional members for recognition and respect. The public discourse on motherhood and its importance to the family and community did produce some strategic advances for the women's movement. If mothers were to be presented as primarily responsible for the health and welfare of future citizens and workers then this contribution deserved recognition. A range of women's demands from the right to limit pregnancies to the reform of the infant guardianship and marriage and divorce laws, and the call for direct state subsidies to mothers could all be considered in the context of the premise that the provision of a healthy environment for the child could not be achieved without attention to the status and material welfare of the mother.

\(^9^0\). Ibid., p. 168.
CHAPTER SEVEN

MATERNITY: 'A DIFFICULT AND DANGEROUS PERIOD'

The public should be taught that it is just as necessary to go to hospital for child-birth as for a surgical operation ... the more universal hospitalization of labour cases is much needed.1

... childbirth ... is a normal function of nature and its greatest, and to associate it in any way with sickness and disease is doing a grave injury to motherhood.2

The successes claimed for the mothercraft movement in protecting and enhancing infant health were overshadowed in the 1920s by a connected problem. The glowing reports of a steady reduction in infant mortality often neglected to note that this reduction was confined to the later months of infancy. The mortality rate of infants in their first month remained constant in the 1920s. Two-thirds of these deaths took place in the first week of life.3 The deaths of neo-natal infants were closely linked to the health and survival rate of mothers and, across this decade, the morbidity and mortality rate of mothers increased.


An enquiry into maternal mortality by the National Council of Women of NSW in 1922 found that approximately seventy per cent of women in NSW and eighty-three per cent in Victoria were attended by a doctor when giving birth and 'in spite of this increased skilled attention, the maternal mortality rate is higher now than it has been for years, and shows no signs of declining'.

Between 1910 and 1925 maternal mortality in Australia rose from 5.1 per thousand births to 5.6 and by 1929 to almost 6 per thousand. The women's movement adopted a number of strategies to render the 'dangerous occupation' of maternity safer but initially at least, they were guided by continued respect for medical expertise in the area of childbearing and rearing. The influential voice of professionals within and without their movement led them to lobby for measures which would emphasise a medical solution to the problem of maternal illness and death. In the process they were to accelerate fundamental changes in the social organisation of childbirth in Australia which may have contributed further to, rather than diminished, the problem they strove to solve.

The Value of the 'Baby Bonus'

Five pounds is not much, but it is a beginning in the right direction.

6. The Woman Voter, Melbourne, 11 July 1912.
In 1912 the Fisher Government introduced a £5 Maternity Allowance, the 'baby bonus' as it was subsequently labelled, payable to all white Australian mothers, whether married or unmarried, and without character or means test, on the birth of a viable infant. While many critics assumed that this measure was a misdirected attempt to encourage mothers to have larger families, Fisher stated the object was 'the protection and care of the mother, which is tantamount to the protection and care of the unborn child'. The £5 was to provide the mother with the means to obtain medical care during confinement. Mothers effectively endorsed the measure by lodging their claims in increasing numbers. By 1921 the National Council of Women reported that 'all classes of the community have taken advantage of the allowance, irrespective of income'.

As a method of safeguarding maternal welfare the 'baby bonus' generated considerable controversy. It was said that the money would be better spent on hospitals and that women wasted it paying rent and buying curtains. In 1923 an 'All Australian Women's Conference on the Maternity Bonus' was convened in Melbourne at the instigation of the National Council of Women of Victoria to

8. SMH, 21 March 1921, p. 9.
determine the most efficient use of bonus money. It was attended by over 120 delegates, the majority from affiliates of the various state National Councils of Women and others from Trades Halls and women's party political groups. Impetus for staging the conference came from the appointment of a Royal Commission on National Insurance and the possibility that the allowance would be incorporated into a compulsory insurance scheme. The delegates to the women's conference unanimously endorsed the motion that additional measures for maternal and infant welfare were urgently required but could not agree upon whether any extension of maternal services would be additional to the bonus or contingent on its abolition. The issues in dispute were long-standing. When the Allowance was first proposed in 1913, the Victorian National Council of Women asked instead that arrangements be made to provide every mother with proper care and treatment during her confinement. Following the implementation of the allowance some member societies plainly considered it an initial, although inadequate, step in the direction of this original goal. Other organisations, in particular the Australian Women's National League, condemned the legislation on the grounds that it demonstrated 'a deplorable lack of that magnificent spirit of self-reliance and independence upon which our nation has been built.'

As a result of friction between affiliates the Victorian National Council of Women in 1921 appointed a committee to examine the operation of the Maternity Allowance. Under the direction of Dr Constance Ellis, Dr Mabel Baillie and Matron Anderson, the committee collected evidence on the extent to which the money was being used to engage doctors to attend births\textsuperscript{13}. The members of the committee brought their own particular professional experiences and concerns to this task. Anderson was Matron of the Queen Victoria Hospital for Women in Melbourne, an institution founded in 1896 to provide the first Victorian medical women graduates with residencies and to institute a medical service for women by women\textsuperscript{14}. Dr Constance Ellis, who had a general and obstetric practice in Malvern, had organised the pathology department at this hospital and acted as its honorary pathologist from 1908 to 1919\textsuperscript{15}. The Queen Victoria opened its own Obstetrics Department and ante-natal clinic in the early 1920s. Anderson, Baillie and Ellis found it was not possible to check the method of expenditure of the grant by individual mothers and they reached the conclusion that the allowance was wasteful, extravagant and ineffective from a personal and national viewpoint.

13. \textit{Argus}, 3 August 1921, p. 4.
The matron of Melbourne's Women's Hospital was reported to have said that 'half-drunk' husbands harassed their recently confined wives taking 'what was left of the baby bonus' to spend on more drink. The committee wanted a more efficient and economical scheme 'which would save the lives now lost through neglect or inadequate nutrition or want of proper medical and nursing attention. They favoured the system in operation at Bradford in England, where a maternity hospital, ante-natal centre, baby health and school children's clinic, a milk depot and district nursing staff were incorporated into the one institution. The New Zealand system, which included large public maternity hospitals and ante-natal clinics in each town, was also considered suitable.

Dr Edith Barrett the Honorary Secretary of the Victorian National Council of Women, presented the committee's findings to the 'All Australian Women's Conference' in 1923. Since the introduction of the Maternity Allowance, she reported, the birth rate had continued to decline, there had been no substantial reduction of the puerperal death rate and the reduction in infant mortality in the first weeks after birth was minimal. Medical men attended more confinements but the maternal death rate remained a 'standing disgrace'. Barrett concluded that the 'baby bonus' was a complete failure.

17. Argus, 3 August 1921, p. 4.
18. Ibid.
as it had not rendered a 'difficult and dangerous period' in women's lives safer.\textsuperscript{19}

Barrett argued for the reallocation of the bonus to the provision of new maternity hospitals and an increase in state subsidies for those already operating. She also singled out the need to establish maternity convalescent homes and to introduce measures to increase the supply of trained midwifery nurses. The work of the Bush and District Nursing Associations, the Baby Health Centres and existing creches and nurseries should be expanded, she said and women educated to expect and secure proper midwifery conditions and ante-natal and post-natal treatment; such instruction would begin 'in the senior classes of the schools and [be] completed at clinics'.\textsuperscript{20} Support for the reallocation of the Allowance in this manner came from women involved in the day to day running of the public maternity hospitals. Barrett herself was a member of the honorary staff of the Queen Victoria and had helped to establish its venereal disease clinic for women and children in 1917.\textsuperscript{21} In her recommendations to the Conference she was supported by Dr Margaret McLorinan a specialist in obstetrics who had developed the ante-natal clinics at both the Women's Hospital and the Queen Victoria in Melbourne.\textsuperscript{22} They

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{19} Kingston, \textit{The World Moves Slowly}, p. 143.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Ib\textit{id.}, p. 147.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Hutton Neve, \textit{This Mad Polly}, p. 139.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Ib\textit{id.}, p. 154.
\end{itemize}
admitted to being 'guided by the view of the British Medical Association', an opponent of the Maternity Allowance scheme and advocate of the redirection of allowance funds to hospital facilities. The CWA also approved the diversion of allowance money to hospitals. It had already begun to agitate for a decentralised system of rural maternity hospitals and wards. The Bush Nursing Association provided midwifery services in outback areas of NSW and Victoria but it was hampered by isolation and primitive domestic conditions. Florence Laver, a Vice-President of the NSW CWA and President of its Crookwell branch, agreed there should be no reduction of the amount at present on the Estimates for maternity aid but instead of giving money to individuals she argued for its redirection towards the establishment of maternity wards in all country hospitals which would be staffed by qualified midwifery nurses, provide free care for poor women and have accommodation for the other children in the family.

In contrast the National Council of Women of NSW moved away from institutional concerns to stress the need to consider 'the point of view of the individual mother in her home in regard to the help the bonus has afforded'. Mrs M.W. MacCallum, the NSW President,


conceded the present system failed to safeguard the health of mother and child but asserted that it had 'the merit of fully recognising and respecting the mother's personal rights'. Within the NSW Council discussion of this issue was as divisive as in Victoria. In 1922 Dr Emma Buckley, a pathologist and former Medical Superintendent of Royal North Shore Hospital, strongly recommended to the Council the reallocation of the available money to medical training schemes, hospitals and ante-natal clinic development and to research into the work-force conditions of women and girls. Maria Sanders, a former Senior Sister at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital who had set up her own private hospital in Burwood, supported her. Dr Constance D'Arcy, a specialist in obstetrics and gynaecology and a representative of obstetric nurses on the Australasian Trained Nurses' Association, opposed the proposal, defending the Allowance for women who did not wish to leave their homes for confinement; the bonus was free from class and charitable distinctions and

26. Ibid., pp. 342, 344.
27. Hutton Neve, This Mad Folly, p. 141.
'the due of every mother'\textsuperscript{31}. She was supported in this argument by Mrs Jamieson Williams, President of the Citizens' Association, who said it would be a retrograde step to withdraw this 'first recognition of the value of the mother to the community'\textsuperscript{32}.

Following this meeting the NSW National Council of Women referred the matter to a committee representing a cross-section of interests within the Council: Emma Buckley and Grace Boelke were doctors, Evelyn Paget Evans a trained nurse, Grace Scobie and Muriel Swain were public servants and Mrs MacCallum, Mrs Jamieson Williams and Ruby Board represented voluntary welfare workers\textsuperscript{33}. The committee met in the rooms of the British Medical Association, and its secretary, Dr Todd, helped draw up the questionnaire which was sent to doctors\textsuperscript{34}. Through Paget Evans questionnaires were sent to baby clinic and public health nurses, to matrons at private and public hospitals and to Benevolent Societies and welfare workers\textsuperscript{35}. In view of the already documented opposition to the Allowance from some of these groups and from members of the committee, its report, released just prior to the 1923 Conference, surprisingly came out strongly in favour of the retention of the maternity bonus for all mothers.

\textsuperscript{31} National Council of Women, NSW, Minutes, 31 August 1922.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{33} SMH, 21 March 1923, p. 9.

\textsuperscript{34} National Council of Women, NSW, Minutes, 'Interim Report of Maternity Allowance Sub-Committee', October 1922.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.; National Council of Women, NSW, Minutes, 26 October 1922.
At the conference Mrs MacCallum reported fully on the committee's findings. The allegations that women of all classes spent the allowance recklessly and without due regard to their own or their infant's health could be disregarded. Such allegations had long been part of public criticisms of the bonus and owed much to the prevailing concept of 'maternal ignorance'. In most cases, she said, the £5 went to pay the doctor and the nurse though sometimes it was spent on a new outfit, a perambulator, household help or on other necessities. Such uses of the £5 were 'all perfectly legitimate ... and in addition, suit the needs of the individual woman as a stereotyped institutionalism would not do' 36. The Council placed its faith in the dignity and self-sacrifice of the 'maternal instinct' and argued that each mother had the right 'to decide for herself on a matter which so intimately concerns herself and in which matter above almost all others, she has the right to the final voice' 37. Of all the alternatives under discussion, the maternity allowance alone allowed for this measure of self-determination.

The NSW Committee failed to agree that the normal birth of a child necessitated the hospitalisation of the mother:

The birth of a little child is so much a family matter; it ought to mean so much, not only to the mother, but to the whole family, that the right place for it would seem to be the home. 38

37. Ibid., p. 346. Her emphasis.
38. Ibid.
As the report pointed out, the resistance of women to maternity care in large public hospitals rested on a number of cogent personal reasons including a feeling of responsibility to the home and its inmates and 'a strong desire for privacy'. The large public hospitals still catered for indigent and unmarried mothers and most were training hospitals for medical students and nurses. While increasing numbers of women entered the smaller private hospitals which had opened from the late nineteenth century, many women considered that a stigma attached to public hospitalisation. Schemes to divert funding to public maternity hospitals were not acceptable to all. It was not the role of the women's movement Mrs MacCallum said, 'to dictate to any mother where her child is to be born or drive her into a hospital against her will, but to see that she is protected in her home, if she chooses to stay there."

Behind the NSW National Council of Women's approval of the Maternity Allowance lay its implications for the status of mothers. It was seen as a preliminary measure in according the mother her due. By its universal application and thus the removal of the taint of charity, it went some way towards acknowledging the importance of the mother's role to the community. Direct cash payment to the mother gave her the security and dignity of her...

39. Ibid.
own income, no matter how small, and ensured that at least in the matter of childbirth she received national recognition. Muriel Heagney of the Victorian Clerks' Union took up this line of reasoning. She argued that the bonus should be seen as an initial step towards full communal responsibility for maternal and infant welfare and moreover, that maternal illness and death were not merely medical problems. What needed to be considered was the relation between economic and social conditions and the high death rate. 'Bad industrial conditions prior to marriage, unhealthy homes, lack of proper food and rest, financial anxiety and worry...' were contributory factors to high maternal mortality. Heagney's work as an investigator for the Federal Unions on the Royal Commission on the Basic Wage alerted her to these problems. She recommended the retention of the bonus, the establishment of a Public Maternity Scheme available to all mothers irrespective of their social condition, and the introduction of a system of motherhood endowment.

Despite the difference of opinions, the 1923 Conference recommended the continuation of the Allowance and supplementary measures to extend existing services for maternal welfare. When the Royal Commission on

42. Muriel Heagney, Has the Maternity Allowance Failed?, paper read to All Australian Women's Conference on the Maternity Bonus, Melbourne, 1923, p. 2.

43. Ibid., p. 4.

44. National Council of Women, NSW, Minutes, 26 April 1923.
National Insurance reported in 1926, it recommended that the Allowance be incorporated into the proposed insurance scheme and that it be restricted to the wives of insured members and women who were themselves contributors. The National Council of Women of NSW criticised its recommendations claiming that such a scheme would be costly to administer and that it treated the family as attachments to the wage-earner, calling them 'dependants' but treating them as 'belongings'. Their main desire they repeated was

... to see recognised ... the woman's share in the national income as apart from any wage or salary earned by the father of the children. The children are the mother's share in the production of the country's wealth.45

The Royal Commission's recommendations were not implemented and the Maternity Allowance remained unaltered until the financial emergency of 193146. The issues raised by the Allowance controversy, especially in relation to the range and quality of maternal care, continued to occupy the attention and energies of the women's movement.

The Medical Surveillance of Maternity

... obstetric authorities are unanimously of the opinion that in efficient ante-natal supervision ... we have ready to hand the method of reducing not only the maternal mortality due to child-birth and the still-birth rate but also the method which will reduce the death rate of infants, especially those occurring during the first weeks after birth.47

45. National Council of Women, NSW, Biennial Reports, 1925-26, p. 22.
Women's organisations at the 'All Australian Women's Conference' which considered the Maternity Allowance did not agree that the 'baby bonus' should be directed towards public maternity facilities but accepted the need for medical advice and supervision in pregnancy and childbirth. They baulked at the idea that the funding of public hospitals and clinics, medical education and research should be at the cost of depriving women of the financial means to choose their birth attendants. The women's associations involved had earlier embarked on a campaign for improvements in midwifery practice. The National Councils of Women had been staunch supporters of the medical profession in its moves for legislation to control the training of midwives. In Victoria a bill was passed in 1915 which set up a board to regulate the training, examination and registration of midwives and to define maternal emergencies necessitating the attendance of a doctor at confinement. This supervision of midwives was tightened by a new Act in 1917.\(^\text{48}\) In NSW several bills for registration were rejected but after repeated representations from the National Council of Women\(^\text{49}\) the Nurses' Registration Act of 1924 introduced state registration and medical control of midwives\(^\text{50}\).

\(^{48}\) Thame, 'Health and the State', pp. 169-70.

\(^{49}\) National Council of Women, NSW, Biennial Reports, 1919-20, p. 6; 1921-22, p. 29; National Council of Women, NSW, Minutes, 31 August 1922; 28 June 1923; 26 June 1924.

The use of doctors and trained midwifery nurses as birth attendants however, had been rapidly proceeding even before the attainment of registration. Those women's organisations which had aided the medical profession to gain control of the training of midwives were concerned that the monopoly of the medical profession in this field did not necessarily ensure a greater degree of safety for the mother.

In 1922 the National Council of Women petitioned the University of Sydney to create a Chair in Obstetrics. They believed this would improve the level of undergraduate medical education and encourage respect amongst the medical profession generally for obstetrics. They were pleased when the University reported efforts were under way to endow a Chair and in the meantime, three additional tutors in obstetrics were appointed. Dr Constance D'Arcy on the University Senate, helped steer the proposal through the Senate and in August 1924 the University and the government appeared to have arrived at agreement on funding. Meanwhile, women stepped up their campaign, led by Millicent Preston Stanley, an executive member of the Feminist Club and candidate in 1925 for election to the NSW Parliament. The University had recently created a Chair in Veterinary Science and approved instruction in horse obstetrics. Preston Stanley, under the catch cry 'Horses' Rights for Women', rallied others to join the campaign to fill the Chair. An appointment was made.

52. Ibid., 29 September 1922.
in 1925, the year Preston Stanley was elected the first woman member of the NSW Parliament. There she speedily secured a suspension of Standing Orders to move that the recommendations of Dr E. Sydney Morris, in his essay on the 'Causes and Prevention of Maternal Mortality and Morbidity', be put into effect immediately\textsuperscript{54}.

Preston continued in Parliament to insist that maternal mortality was a question which 'transcended all party politics and rested for its solution on common humanity'\textsuperscript{55}. She castigated the recently defeated Labor Government for its failure to reduce maternal mortality and Sydney University for its tardiness in establishing a Chair of Obstetrics. She demanded of the Government the expansion of maternity hospitals, the establishment of maternity homes with post-natal clinics in the city and country, the introduction of legislation making puerperal infections notifiable and more training in obstetrics for medical students\textsuperscript{56}.

The timing of this campaign, after the authorities agreed to improve the level of obstetric training, seems to indicate that it was at least partially orchestrated to foster public awareness of the dangers of childbirth and the sufferings of many mothers resulting from inadequate maternal care. This publicity also served to confirm childbirth as a distinctly medical problem. The principal

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55. \textit{Ibid.}

56. \textit{Ibid.}
encouragement for this agitation seemed to emanate from a growing band of specialists in the field of obstetrics and gynaecology. Within the National Councils of Women specialists in these fields included Dr Constance D'Arcy in Sydney and Drs Constance Ellis and Margaret McLorinan in Melbourne. The Council frequently invited other specialists to give lectures to women and to support its recommendations for reform. Intent on improving the status of obstetrics within the medical profession, these specialists were in the process of establishing a model of maternal care which laid great emphasis on training in obstetrics, ante-natal care which incorporated their own diagnostic skills, and hospital birth. The National Councils of Women provided a particularly suitable and receptive forum for the dissemination of their message.

In August 1925 Professor J.C. Windeyer, newly appointed to the Chair of Obstetrics, addressed a combined meeting of the National Council of Women and the Women's League in Sydney. The major points raised in his discussion of maternal mortality summarised the medical message of maternity expounded by obstetricians in the 1920s. The reduction of the high rate of mortality he suggested, required not only improved training of medical students and increased training and medical supervision of midwifery nurses, but also the education of

57. See National Council of Women, NSW, Biennial Reports, 1919-20, p. 6; 1923-24, p. 5; SMH, 15 October 1924, p. 9; National Council of Women, NSW, Minutes, 5 July 1928.

58. National Council of Women, NSW, Minutes, 30 July 1925.
the public and especially women, in the advantages of ante-natal supervision and expanded hospital facilities for maternity cases. Students he said, were now taught

... that the duties of a medical practitioner start as early in pregnancy as possible and continue during pregnancy, labour and the lying-in period ... He is not only taught the essentials in the conduct of cases of normal and abnormal labour, but he receives instruction in the diagnosis and treatment of abnormal conditions which are peculiar to pregnancy and the lying-in period, and stress is laid upon the fact that by early recognition and prompt treatment he will prevent much suffering and will save many lives.59

It would seem, however, that even by the mid-1920s general practitioners were often unwilling or unable to provide ante-natal care. A common complaint at women's meetings was that pregnant women did not normally consult their doctor until just before confinement while many received only cursory advice at this time from a disinterested general practitioner. The medical neglect of this service was also noted by the Australasian Nurses' Journal. In an article on ante-natal care it suggested that obstetric [i.e. midwifery] nurses could move into this area without challenging the doctor's interests. The role neglected by the 'family doctor' could be filled by the 'family nurse' who could advise women in diet, exercise, the care of teeth and breasts, and the necessity for sufficient sleep. She could allay their

fears by explaining the normal labour process. As Windeyer made clear, an independent role for the midwifery nurse did not have the medical profession's approval. The interest of the obstetrician in ante-natal care was to detect abnormalities which were likely to lead to complications during pregnancy or birth. Mere advice on diet or hygiene he regarded as inadequate in the face of the unpredictable nature of pregnancy.

The medical profession encouraged the National Council of Women to provide the publicity which would result in ante-natal supervision by a doctor becoming 'expected and demanded by all pregnant women'. Windeyer advised his audience that the

... risk to the child should be stressed in all propaganda, as it will appeal to the mother or protective instinct of a great many women, who might otherwise not bother about supervision on their own behalf.

The Federal Conference of National Councils of Women in 1926 recommended co-operation with local Health Departments in propaganda work aimed at convincing women of the need for increased medical supervision of their pregnancies and the NSW Council again urged the Minister for Health to establish baby clinics throughout the state 'where a mother can receive medical treatment and advice both before

62. Ibid., p. 492.
63. Ibid.
64. Advance! Australia, September 1926, p. 119.
and after the birth of her child. Enthusiasm for ante-natal supervision was endorsed by the Royal Commission on Health. It reported that puerperal septicaemia, a major cause of maternal mortality, was the result of faulty obstetric practices at or about the time of childbirth. The report also highlighted other potentially dangerous complications able to be detected by ante-natal supervision. It recommended that the Commonwealth subsidise ante-natal facilities and that the payment of the Maternity Allowance be made conditional on the mother providing proof of ante-natal supervision by a medical practitioner.

The second half of the decade was marked by mounting enthusiasm for this model of maternity care. In NSW some ante-natal care was available at baby health centres. The new director of the Infant and Maternal Welfare Division of the Department of Health, Dr E. Sydney Morris, was a particularly keen advocate of such services and in 1929 the first clinic devoted to ante-natal care was opened in Newtown. In Victoria doctors continued to resist the provision of ante-natal services free of charge. All activities relating to maternity, whether the provision of services or research, continued to be sponsored by municipal authorities or voluntary agencies. Ante-natal clinics operated at the Women's, Queen

Victoria and Alfred Hospitals, and the Victorian Baby Health Centres Association and Prahran Health Centre introduced ante-natal supervision. The National Council of Women lobbied the Premiers' Conference in 1929 that it should be made a condition of receiving the Maternity Allowance that efforts had been made by applicants to obtain adequate ante-natal care. The first Director of Obstetrical Research at Melbourne University, Dr Marshall Allan, and the National Council of Women, conducted a similar campaign to that in Sydney for a Chair of Obstetrics to which Marshall Allan was appointed in 1929.

Despite some reluctance to provide funds for maternal services and obstetric research it is clear that the model of preventive medical care set up by specialists was gaining credence both with health authorities and mothers in the late 1920s. This commitment to preventive health care reflected not only a concern for public welfare but also the narrower professional interests of specialists. An identification with preventive maternal care allowed obstetricians to set themselves apart from their fellow doctors. Where abnormalities were detected or a difficult delivery anticipated their special skills denoted they were the appropriate person to offer treatment. Deliberately or inadvertently they succeeded in shifting responsibility for improvement in maternal mortality from

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71. e.g. National Council of Women, Victoria, Minutes, Annual Congress, October 1926; Thame, 'Health and the State', p. 167.
more general programs designed to promote the welfare of women and children, to the medical profession and its institutions. Women's organisations had helped them lobby for reforms. The impact of this propaganda campaign was to confirm maternity as a problematic area requiring medical supervision and treatment.

Women and Midwifery

For the women's movement, important grounds for concern remained. Obstetricians were engaged in a process of defining the field of midwifery as exclusively the province of the medical profession. Women's organisations in helping to validate this claim, accelerated a long-term process which saw authority in the area of childbearing and rearing shift from midwives, nurses and mothers, to the medical profession and its institutions. Towards the end of the decade some women were openly critical of the medical depiction of pregnancy and childbirth. Rather than seeing maternity as a problem best handled by the predominantly male medical profession, they looked on childbirth as a natural function and regarded its organisation as something for women to decide. However, such were the advances made by the medical profession in this area that these misgivings had little effect on established practices.

The alliance between medical specialists and women reformers was already beginning to show signs of deterioration before the end of the decade. In 1927, during the debate on maternal welfare at the Triennial
Conference of the Australian Federation of Women Voters in Sydney, a South Australian delegate, Mrs Carlile McDonnell, launched a bitter attack on doctors for their failure to solve the problem of maternal mortality despite their increased attendance at childbirth following the introduction of the Maternity Allowance. She argued that the training of medical students in midwifery still left room for improvement. In Sydney, women from the Feminist Club, the Citizens' Association, the Women's Union of Service, the Housewives' Association, the Women's League, the Professional Women Workers' Association, the Racial Hygiene Centre and the CWA approached the University to increase its endowment for Obstetrics to extend clinical training and research. Meeting with little success they resolved to form themselves into a Standing Committee for the Reduction of Infant and Maternal Mortality and in the following year took their case to the Premier. Their petition, signed by over four thousand women, called for the appointment of a Royal Commission to investigate all causes contributing to maternal mortality and the 'appalling' morbidity of women giving birth and to enquire generally into infant mortality. The organisers of the petition, as one participant later recalled, were mostly 'highly qualified and double certificated nurses of long experience' and it was

72. SMH, 19 May 1927, p. 12.


74. SMH, 22 August 1928, p. 16; Herself, 17 September 1928, p. 10.

75. SMH, 26 June 1929, p. 9.
requested that the commission 'should consist mostly of women with special qualifications',76. They seemed well aware that a sexual division of labour had evolved in obstetric care which was rendering less important the claims to practical expertise and skill of nurses, mothers and also to some extent women doctors. Those formulating and implementing policy were mostly men. One member of the Standing Committee thought this decision-making monopoly should be reversed:

... the sooner the whole subject of midwifery is handed back to women, from whose domain it should never have passed, the better it will be for Australia and for the human race in general.77

A committee, consisting of Dr Margaret Harper, Professor J.C. Windeyer and Dr E. Sydney Morris, was appointed by the NSW Government to consider maternal mortality but its report virtually ignored the issue of medical standards in midwifery. Instead it focussed on the training and types of services provided by midwifery nurses, especially those in public hospitals. It appeared to respond to long-standing fears that such institutions harboured untrained midwives and abortionists78. Windeyer, in an address to the National Council of Women in 1925, highlighted the role of abortionists to explain the maternal mortality figures. Mortality statistics recorded all deaths directly related to pregnancy, including deaths

76. Ibid.
77. SMH, 26 June 1929, p. 9.
resulting from abortions, while figures for births were related to the registration of living infants. Windeyer claimed that abortions accounted for more than eleven per cent of deaths during the three preceding years and that from twelve per cent to fifteen per cent of pregnancies terminated in miscarriages. Because such factors were not immediately visible in the statistics, maternal mortality seemed from fifteen to twenty-five per cent higher than it really was. At the 1928 Federal Conference of National Councils of Women, Windeyer, Morris and Dr Arthur, the NSW Minister for Health, dwelt on the contribution of 'illegal operations' to the maternal death rate. Agitation followed for closer supervision of private maternity hospitals and the appointment of more inspectors to supervise private hospitals and midwives. The resolution passed by the Victorian National Council of Women was framed specifically 'with a view to minimise maternal mortality and to act as a check on cases of abortion', and to compel midwives to notify all cases of living and still-births and abortions within thirty-six hours.

Twenty years earlier, similar agitation had preceded the passage of the Private Hospital Act. The available statistics made it difficult to pinpoint the responsibility for the mortality rate. The abortionist

80. SMH, 20 July 1928, p. 6.
was a conventional scapegoat to a profession which increasingly appeared to be failing women. Among obstetricians complaints began to be heard about the conduct of general practitioners: the 'normal' birth process had become excessively interventionist. Doctors were too ready to resort to anaesthetics and forceps in delayed and difficult delivery. The obstetricians were not supporting the position of women complainants of current birth practices. Rather than hand back the organisation of birth to women, obstetricians saw the defects of current practice as additional reason for birth to be yet more exclusively under medical control, that of themselves. An unease among women at the way control of this most important of women's activities had passed from women may be detected in the call by the Standing Committee on Infant and Maternal Mortality, in 1929, for the 'culture and status of Maternity Nurses [to] be raised and the course of training lengthened,' 82.

Controversy still remained over the level and causes of maternal mortality. Dame Janet Campbell in 1930 reported that regardless of the inconsistencies in statistical records Australia was

... faced with a stationary or even increasing death-rate associated with pregnancy and child-bearing in spite of an improved standard of general and domestic hygiene and of the advances of modern medicine. 83

82. Herself, 17 September 1929, p. iii.

Campbell favoured a return to the use of midwives for births unless complications were anticipated. She commended midwives as specialists, noted they were not as exposed to the risk of other infections as doctors and that they tended to be more sympathetic and closer to the real problems of the patient being women themselves.\textsuperscript{84} Developments in the organisation of childbirth however, made this return to midwives impossible. General practitioners had come to see midwifery as the backbone of family practice and closed ranks to protect the medical monopoly on pregnancy and childbirth. Dr Constance D'Arcy pointed out that women wanted quick and painless labour and as midwives were not allowed to use forceps or administer anaesthetics women would not go to them. D'Arcy was one of the specialists who had criticised 'meddlesome midwifery' by doctors in their management of labour: too many vaginal examinations during labour, undue haste and the resort to forceps, and the mismanagement of the placenta's expulsion all increased the risk of puerperal infection.\textsuperscript{85} She failed to address the issue of permitting the qualified midwifery nurse access to the obstetrician's tools. The changes in the training of midwifery nurses and constrictions on their practices had so eroded the ranks of independent midwives that it was no longer possible to turn back to the British system of midwifery as advocated by Dame Janet Campbell.

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., pp. 20-21.

The supervision and management of childbirth had been converted into a doctor's, or preferably an obstetrician's, job by the end of the decade. In the process a decided note of ambivalence had crept into depictions of the birth process. Dr Morris stressed that childbirth 'after all, was a perfectly normal function' but in the same breath argued that 'modern conditions of life tend to make it a dangerous one',\(^{86}\). Even if women followed ante-natal advice and had a good diet and adequate sleep this regimen in itself could not guarantee an uneventful pregnancy. The mother could not expect that her state of health would remain consistent throughout a single pregnancy thus she needed to visit the doctor more often to guard against the unforeseeable complications which were, the doctors insisted, ever so likely to occur.

The redefinition of reproduction as a pathological rather than natural state also increased pressure on women to enter hospital for their confinements. Windeyer suggested to the National Council of Women in 1925 that hospital treatment was necessary for abnormal confinements\(^{87}\) but if complications were unexpected, and pregnancy could rapidly turn from normal to abnormal, it was only a small step to recommend that all women enter hospital for birth as a precautionary measure. Dr Watson Munro, who also frequently lectured to the National Council of Women in Sydney, stressed that women received and cared for at properly managed maternity hospitals almost entirely

\(^{86}\) SMH, 4 April 1927, p. 12.

\(^{87}\) Windeyer, 'Maternal Mortality', p. 492.
escaped the dangers facing patients in their homes because in an institution 'careful foresight was ... systematically practised, and modern scientific measures were in readiness to meet all emergencies'. Margaret Kearney of the Women's Standing Committee remained critical. To the proposal to establish maternity wards in all hospitals she said it was

... at once a dangerous and cruel proposal, and no woman, unless she be absolutely destitute, will allow her baby to be born in a public institution and in an environment of disease, depression and death.

Yet by 1930 approximately two-thirds of Sydney women were entering a hospital for their confinement. In rural areas a similar proportion were also entering hospital. In this respect the work of the CWA was significant. The Association played a key role in delivering hospital facilities for maternity to country mothers. In the early 1920s the rest-rooms and club houses they established were often extended to include lying-in facilities for women from outlying properties. This interim measure was progressively replaced as the Association raised funds and successfully lobbied State and local government for the erection of small maternity wards attached to Bush Nurse Cottages and the establishment of maternity wards and homes in larger country...

88. SMH, 15 October 1924, p. 9.
89. Ibid., 5 October 1927, p. 8.
91. R. Bowden (ed.), The Country Women's Association, ABC Coming Out Show Documentary, Tape Recording, ML 118.
towns. The Public Hospitals Act of 1929 in NSW gave individual hospitals the option of establishing private and intermediate wards and made maternal care in public hospitals possible for women of all incomes. The increased funding of maternity beds and hospitals demonstrated not only the willingness of the state to become directly involved in maternity health but also that progress in this area would be directly tied to the medical profession and its institutions. The consolidation of medical authority also served to undermine women's claims to practical expertise in birth and encouraged the distancing of reproduction from everyday family life. At the same time, as in the area of infant health, it remained the responsibility of mothers to seek out the medical services to safeguard their own and their infants' lives. The passing references made by some women reformers to the need for some wider communal responsibility for women and children were not developed in the context of maternity. Maternal welfare had become a medical problem for which solutions would be sought in the medical treatment of individual pathology - not in the social and economic environment of mothers.

92. CWA, NSW, Annual Report, 1926-28, p. 35; Sydney Stock and Station Journal, 12 September 1922, p. 3; May 1924, p. 2; Farmer and Settler, 24 April 1925, p. 16; 20 February 1925, p. 15.
CHAPTER EIGHT

THE 'FAMILY WAGE' AND THE 'MOTHER'S REWARD'

The mother renders the highest service to the State. She gives the citizen, she should be paid for her service. 1

The ideal of the 'non-working' wife was well established in Australia by the early 1900s as one important measure of the adequacy and justice of men's wages. The concept of a minimum wage sufficient to support a man, his wife and three dependant children, in 'reasonable comfort', was gradually institutionalised at the federal level following the 1907 'Harvester' judgement. State wage declarations were also formulated in line with this principle. The 'family wage' concept accentuated the economic dependence of the housewife and mother. In the 1920s family endowment gathered support from employers as an alternative to the 'family wage' as a means of child maintenance. Wage restraint was more readily achievable if the wage was not tied to support of the family. The National Councils of Women and their affiliates were also interested in a system of payment directly tied to child maintenance. They sought recognition of woman's contribution to the community, independent of the wage paid by industry to the male worker. Both groups hoped to realise their aims by a system of family endowment.

'The only wage she ever asks ...'

... the mother who rears children for the future of industry and the State has a right to receive the only wage she ever asks - enough to enable her as society's trustee for nurture and education to discharge the duties of her trust.²

A Maintenance of Children Bill was introduced into the NSW Parliament in 1919 following the living wage declaration from the Board of Trade which substantially increased the existing rate of £3/7/-³. The proposed introduction of endowment was to be accompanied by an amendment to the Industrial Arbitration Act to alter the domestic unit on which the NSW 'living wage' was based from four to two. The circumstances surrounding the introduction of the measure highlighted its essential purpose, wage restraint. The legislation failed to pass. With the appointment of A.B. Piddington to the Royal Commission on the Federal Basic Wage in 1919, schemes for child endowment continued to attract attention. The amount needed to maintain the 'average' family of five on the Harvester equivalent was calculated at thirty-six per cent higher than the current Commonwealth basic wage⁴.


4. Ibid., p. 70.
Industry stated it could not possibly afford the increase and the unions tacitly agreed. Piddington began campaigning for a national child endowment scheme. He described his scheme in *The Next Step: A Family Basic Income* (1921), asserting that the minimal duty of the employer was to provide out of the products of industry, sufficient for all employees and their families to live in reasonable comfort. Under the existing system of wage determination this could best be achieved, he said, by determining the 'living wage' on the basis of a man and his wife and paying an endowment of 12/- per week for each child. The necessary finance could be raised by a tax on employers according to the number of their employees. Piddington recommended the amount be paid to the mother of the children. His wife Marion was a foundation member of the Racial Improvement Society, and the Institute of Family Relations, and lectured to women's organisations on sex education and eugenic issues. Under her influence Piddington was sensitive to the continuing debate within the women's movement on the unrecognised nature of woman's work in the home.

*Woman's economic independence was a continuing*


6. See *Australian Highway*, 1920-21 for accounts of lectures by Marion Piddington; see also her argument for 'celibate motherhood' or artificial insemination published as *Via Nuova; or Science and Maternity*, 1916, and Marion Piddington, *The Unmarried Mother*, Sydney, 1923 in Rischbieth papers, ANL MS2004, Series 12, Item 2982.
concern of the women's movement. The wife's economic independence had been a plank on the earliest women's platform but the dilemma was how it could be achieved. Angela Booth might suggest married women re-enter the paid work-force but such a solution was not part of the women's movement's strategy. Some women favoured legislation setting out the wife's entitlement to a 'share of the breadwinner's wages', but that was not a popular solution. The principle of sharing was supported but not the codification of that principle in legislation. The National Council of Women upheld the principle in its 1922 report: 'The position of the woman in the home should be that of a partner, the income being the joint property'. In this 'partnership' the husband was expected to provide an allowance for his wife, separate from general household expenditure. The National Council did not wish to see the state define the allowance which a wife should receive as it considered the interests of the husband and wife could not be separated in such a mercenary fashion. Dependence in marriage was characterised as a mutal contract. If

7. e.g. Angela Booth, The Payment of Women's Work, p. 7; Australian Highway, January 1924, p. 236; The Australian Home, 24 April 1925, p. 17.
11. Farmer and Settler, 10 July 1925, p. 15.
women had a duty to the home, men had a duty to support women and children emotionally and financially. Legal intervention would upset a contract based on trust and fidelity. The attraction of motherhood endowment was the ideal of the state paying the mother an income separate from that earned by the father thus providing her with an independent income for her work of caring for children.

The Workers' Educational Association, revitalised under its first woman President, Henrietta Greville, took up this aspect of motherhood endowment:

All over the world to-day the cry goes up for the Economic Independence of married women. The single woman, the child-less wife and widow have to a certain extent solved their problems by the increased rate of wages, and the increased means of earning and making money. The mother is still too much tied to the whims or caprice or necessity of her partner. Endowment without restrictions to class or status would solve hers.

Henrietta Greville was herself a staunch advocate of Piddington's scheme. After her marriage failed in 1889 she had supported her family of four by working as a seamstress and running refreshment rooms. In the depression of the 1890s she moved with her family to

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12. Henrietta Greville (1861-1964) was a well-known activist in the NSW Labour movement and had worked as an organiser for the Australian Workers' Union, the Women Workers' Union and the Labor Women's Central Organising Committee. In 1917 she stood unsuccessfully as a Labor candidate for the federal seat of Wentworth. Jane Tabberer, The Times of Henrietta, Sydney, [1970].

the goldfields of West Wyalong where she pegged a claim and sold meals to the miners. In 1894 she married Hector Greville, a miner and union organiser. Henrietta continued to work outside the home, cooking and sewing to contribute to their support. While engaged in industry, she said, 'organised bodies of women workers receive, like men, their award from a legally constituted tribunal. Why then, should a woman forfeit the measure of economic independence which is hers prior to ... incurring the responsibilities of matrimony?'.

Piddington, however, specifically rejected any 'recognition of women as an independent economic unit'; this he said, was far too wide a question to be dealt with by endowment. What he did promote was the right of the mother 'to receive the only wage she ever asks enough to enable her as society's trustee for nurture and education to discharge the duties of her trust.'

Despite this disclaimer, the idea that endowment might in some way represent 'payment for motherhood' continued to infuse the rhetoric surrounding endowment. When the Maintenance of Children Bill was before the NSW Parliament in 1919, the payment of endowment to mothers was described as 'our recognition of the principle of a definite payment by the community for the services they

17. Ibid., pp. 29-30.
are rendering as the guardians of children. Similarly with the Motherhood Endowment Bill introduced in 1920 and reintroduced in 1921, the intention was represented as 'some return for the benefit that accrues to Australia from the service performed by every mother.'

The National Council of Women was quick to point out endowment was not a true 'payment for motherhood'. In 1920 the NSW Council invited politicians to speak on endowment and afterwards expressed its satisfaction that the incumbent Labor government planned to introduce a scheme, but suggested it should not use the term 'motherhood'. This request sparked off a heated controversy amongst women activists who felt that it indicated a lack of sympathy, on the part of the Council, with woman's drive for economic independence. The Council's supporters pointed out that their request was made for practical reasons and in the interests of clarity. Annie Wilson, an executive member, explained:

... the objection to the word "Motherhood" being used in the title of the bill is, to my mind, both perfectly laudable and right, because it is not in the true sense in the least applicable ... Child Endowment, or Child Maintenance would surely be the more truthful and befitting title.

18. SMH, 12 September 1919, p. 8.
22. Ibid., December 1920, p. 13.
Some questioned whether women indeed wished to receive payment for their work as mothers. Annie Wilson suggested that a 'mother needs no endowment for her motherhood. What she gives cannot, is not wanted, to be paid for in so much hard cash'\textsuperscript{23}. The demand from some quarters that women be paid for their labours as mothers cut right across the orthodox notion that family life, and the respective duties of each parent, were undertaken for any motivation less pure than love and a sense of familial and community duty. The mother might labour unpaid in the home caring for its inmates but 'her payment ... [was] the love of her husband and children and their success in life'\textsuperscript{24}. The weight of the ideology of motherly love ensured that the gains made by the mother could not easily be reduced to financial terms.

The National Council of Women was cautious about endorsing any scheme of endowment. Some affiliates welcomed the proposal. The Housewives' Association independently proclaimed its support for the Piddington system as a means of affirming the status of the housewife and mother and of containing the wages spiral which contributed to inflation\textsuperscript{25}. Not until 1925, after considerable debate within the Council, did the National Council of Women in Victoria declare its support for a 'system of Motherhood Endowment on the lines of the Piddington

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{24} SMH, 30 September 1919, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{25} Argus, 26 July 1921, p. 4.
scheme' as the 'best method of providing a satisfactory standard of living for the majority of children'.

Later in the same year the NSW Council also publicly announced its support for Piddington's scheme. The Council's Standing Committee on Child Welfare advised that the adoption of the Piddington scheme was desirable to supplement the shortfall in the basic wage where families were larger than the norm and also because of the 'inability of industry to increase wages'.

At the 1926 Federal Conference there was further discussion of both the principle and the application of endowment. After concerted lobbying by Mildred Muscio from NSW and Eleanor Glencross and Mrs H. Fossett from Victoria, the conference approved the introduction of family endowment with a readjustment of wages. Some women on the Council were married to employers or were themselves employers of labour and may have been influenced by a hope of personal benefit from any reduction in the wages bill but if so, that expectation only partly accounts for the more

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26. National Council of Women, Victoria, Minutes, Special Meeting 12 May 1925; Executive Meeting 11 June 1925.

27. National Council of Women, NSW, Minutes, 26 November 1925.


29. Federal National Council of Women, Minutes, 26 July 1926.
general willingness among Council members to dismantle the 'family wage'. A frequent complaint from women's groups at the time was that 'the basic wage question was ruined because of the ... selfishness of the single men and the childless married, who demanded that they should also be paid enough to keep a wife and three children'. These men were thought to spend their wages on drink and gambling while their 'high wages' forced prices up to the detriment of the housewife. This 'selfishness' accompanied the male worker into marriage. Accustomed to enjoy a wage margin which allowed for pleasurable past-times, he might continue this course to the detriment of his wife and children. No mechanism existed to ensure that the 'family wage' of the male worker was used to provide his wife and children with an adequate standard of living and the wife and mother, unlike the unionist, had no way of exerting the combined pressure available to unions.

The National Council's support for child endowment entailed, at least for a minority of members, an oblique attack on the way in which male 'living wage' theory was used to justify lower rates for women in the labour market. At the 1926 Federal Conference, Mrs


31. The women's movement reacted with horror to the suggestion by the Labor government in 1921 that endowment funds could be raised by state lotteries. The gambling of husbands and fathers, along with drinking, were seen as a primary cause of family poverty. See The Woman's Voice, July 1921, p. 6; September 1921, p.11.
A.K. Goode, a South Australian delegate took the opportunity to call for equal pay for equal work. 'If a single man was treated the same as a married man', she asked, 'why not, in the name of justice, was single woman also, if she did the same work'. This was not a demand which the Councils were prepared to support unreservedly. They supported the principle of equal pay for equal work for professional women, as these women workers could easily be shown to perform work equal to that of male colleagues. Professional women were also strongly represented on the Councils. The majority of professional women chose career in preference to marriage and family. Working women, however, usually made no such choice or at least, were not thought to have done so. Their destiny was to become wives. As wives of working men their interests were best protected by the continuation of the 'family wage'. Child endowment promised to deliver some benefits to mothers even if it did not constitute a 'wage' for mothers. Yet the response of the NSW Council to the recommendations of the Royal Commission on National Insurance in 1926 reveals the dilemma which the issue occasioned. The Commissioners recommended that the wife of an insured member receive child endowment payments if the breadwinner was incapacitated or unemployed. In a statement prepared by Sibyl

32. *Advance! Australia*, September 1926, p. 120.
Morrison\textsuperscript{33}, the convenor of the Standing Committee on Laws, the Council voiced its objections to this proposal because it portrayed women as attachments to the wage earner, as his 'belongings'. Endowment, the Council believed, should not depend on the father's health or employment status and should be independent of any insurance scheme, so as to recognise 'the woman's share in the national income as apart from any wages or salary earnt by the father of the children', and be paid to the mother in trust for the children who were her 'share in the production of the country's wealth'.\textsuperscript{34}.

In all the discussion of child endowment the level of payments proposed was so small as to leave little if anything as payment for a mother's services. Yet it provided her with a source of income independent of her husband's willingness or ability to provide it from wages. The scheme established 'social recognition of a principle' of income transfer to mothers. The women's movement support for the 'only wage' which a mother could ask - a separate income in trust for her children - represented not only a challenge to traditional methods of wage fixation but also the seeds of an even more fundamental challenge to the inequitable economic relationship existing between husbands and wives.

\textsuperscript{33} Sibyl Morrison was called to the NSW Bar in 1924 and became the first woman to practise as a barrister in this state. Like a number of other women lawyers she contributed her services to the National Council of Women. She was also a member of the Sydney University Women Graduates' Association and the Professional Women Workers' Association. \textit{Who's Who in Australia}, 1933-34.

\textsuperscript{34} National Council of Women, NSW, \textit{Biennial Reports}, 1925-26, p. 22.
The Introduction of Child Endowment

In March 1927 a Family Endowment Act was passed in NSW. In conjunction with the introduction of widow's pensions in 1926, it seemed that the government in this state had in fact taken heed of women's desires to have their contribution to the home and community recognised by designated payments to mothers. J.T. Lang the Premier, later claimed that these measures represented an important step in the direction of achieving economic independence for mothers. While both measures allowed the transfer of some income to a small group of mothers this was not a 'reward' for mothers. In its final form the Endowment Act had more to do with wage restraint than with the 'mother's reward'.


36. The Widow's Pension Act (1926) provided for an endowment of £1 per week to widowed mothers and ten shillings for every dependant child under fourteen years. The pension was subject to a means test and limited to widowed mothers earning less than £78 per year. Summers, Damned Whores, p. 393.

A.B. Piddington, newly appointed NSW Industrial Commissioner in 1926 with power to declare a 'living wage', announced that £5/6/- was the rate needed for a family unit of five. The current rate of £4/4/-, he stated, provided a decent living standard for a man, his wife and only one child. Piddington used his new position to create a situation where the early introduction of legislation for family endowment was imperative. The problem confronting the labour movement in its consideration of the introduction of child endowment had always been the need to preserve existing wage levels and to defend the domestic unit upon which current wages were calculated. The 1921 Motherhood Endowment Bill sought to retain a four unit family concept. In this way the wages of single or childless men would remain the same and those with over two children would be in receipt of additional money. Similarly, in 1927, Labor's original bill was planned to establish the independence of child endowment from wage fixation by endowing all children, with a £400 income ceiling for the receipt of this benefit significantly above the minimum wage. The Family Endowment Bill, introduced in February 1927, followed these lines with a lower income ceiling and finance ensured by a 6.5 per cent payroll tax on all employers, including the Crown.

39. Ibid., p. 154.
The National Council of Women and its affiliates remained conspicuously silent in the face of the storm which broke over the endowment bill. If they made any contribution to the debate no record remains of their response. It was left to Millicent Preston Stanley to articulate the woman's point of view in parliament. Preston Stanley was an executive member of the National Council of Women and President for many years of the Feminist Club. Motherhood she held, was the 'most important function performed by a person for or on behalf of the state'. In her speeches she stressed the difficulties facing mothers attempting to rear their families on limited incomes and outlined the decline in family standards which accompanied the birth of each child additional to those covered under the 'living wage'. It was the mother who suffered most as a result of family poverty as she cut down on her own pleasures, her purchases of clothes and finally her food consumption in an effort to absorb the brunt of the family's poverty. She used this argument to attack those male parliamentarians who spoke of the working man 'maintaining' his wife:

40. NSWPD, Vol. 110, p. 1249; Millicent Preston Stanley's own parents had divorced in 1895 and she and her two younger brothers were brought up by their mother under conditions of some hardship. Her early experiences seemed to have affected her deeply and she later incorporated her mother's maiden name, Preston, into her own surname. Smith, 'Millicent Preston Stanley', p. viii.

... no man - at any rate amongst the working classes - can claim to maintain his wife, for she really makes as big and as valuable contribution to the life of the nation, and to the economy of the home and to the community generally, as any man makes.42

Preston Stanley highlighted the impact that poor nutrition and health levels had on mothers and their children, and the quality of the race generally, and like many women reformers, drew on the ideology of eugenics to propound a case for the protection of women and children. Much of eugenic thought dealt with the 'natural' domains in which woman's contribution was paramount - health, sexuality, procreation and education. In the popular exposition of eugenic principles the lack of distinction between learned and hereditary characteristics left the field free for the women's movement to develop an all-encompassing view of woman's contribution to humanity. On women, the 'guardians of the future race', rested the responsibility of ensuring that children inherited physical and mental health and also that they received the proper food and an ordered and healthy environment to ensure their development as fit citizens of Australia. Preston Stanley subsequently voted with her party against the Family Endowment bill. Brushing aside the critics who interpreted her action as evidence that her party loyalties took precedence over her proclaimed non-party feminist commitments43, she

42. Ibid., p. 1249.
43. Smith, 'Millicent Preston Stanley', p. 34.
defended herself by objecting to the methods of financing proposed by the bill. When finally passed, the Act narrowly restricted the payment of endowment. It was accompanied by legislation prescribing the declared minimum living wage which would be set to cover the needs of a man and wife. The full payment of endowment was in effect restricted to those families with income on or below this minimum. Over the first twelve months of the Act's operation 23,310 claims were granted, 5,245 refused and 371 withdrawn. Little publicity was given to the reasons for the rejection of claims. Some possibly understated income but as the machinery clauses of the Act enabling claims to be investigated and assessed were modelled on those of the Widow's Pension Act, and involved investigation and surveillance of the applicant to ensure adherence to correct state notions of motherhood, it can be deduced that 'immorality', drunkenness or 'misuse' of endowment money were among the grounds for rejection.

The National Council of Women in NSW made little comment on the passage of this legislation. The inclusion from the outset of a means test, and the relatively small numbers of mothers endowed under the Act, made it plain that social recognition of mothers as a class was not the intention of the Act. The National

Council earlier had accepted the desirability of changing the family unit for wage fixation as a necessary step in any scheme of endowment and their reticence at joining in the public debate over the bill probably had much to do with their desire to uphold the cross-class status of the Council.

In June 1927 the Commonwealth government called a Premiers Conference to consider the question of endowment from a national standpoint. At the federal level a limited form of child endowment was already in operation for Commonwealth public servants but the Commonwealth lacked constitutional powers to control wages and had no clear constitutional power to introduce endowment. It appointed a Royal Commission in

45. In 1920 in the Commonwealth public service, the basic wage of employees was set at £4 per week with allowances for each child set at 5/- subject to an income ceiling. The scheme operated at first by making direct additions to the wage of married employees with children. From 1923 it was financed by deductions from the wages of all adult male employees. Significantly, the endowment was not paid to the mother but was conceived as an addition to the wage of those male officers with dependants. Cass, 'Redistribution to Children and to Mothers', p. 70; J.B. Beyrer, 'Family Allowances in Australia' in Roe, Social Policy in Australia, p. 266.

1927 to consider how child endowment policy might best be introduced. A number of women's organisations, including the Federal body of the National Councils of Women and the Australian Federation of Women Voters, lobbied the government to ensure that the 'woman's point of view' was adequately represented and to their considerable satisfaction, Mildred Muscio, the President of the National Council of Women of Australia, was appointed to the Commission.47

Muscio epitomised the new wave of university-educated women who gained positions of influence in the State women's Councils following the war. A graduate from the University of Sydney with first class honours and an MA in philosophy, she married in 1915 Bernard Muscio, a similarly gifted philosophy graduate who was appointed Challis Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sydney in 1922. She shared with him an interest in the social message of industrial psychology.48 In 1923 she organised a Good Film League which affiliated to the NSW National Council of Women. After she was

47. SMH, 22 July 1927, p. 12; National Council of Women, Victoria, Minutes, 23 June 1927; SMH, 7 September 1927, p. 15.

widowed in 1926 she became Federal President of the National Councils and from 1927-37 was NSW President.\[^{49}\] When the Royal Commission issued its report in 1929, advising endowment was not feasible and not necessary, Muscio and John Curtin\[^{50}\] submitted a Minority Report calling for the immediate introduction of a Federal child endowment scheme. The submissions from women and the Minority Report of the Commission provide a significant outline of the diversity of women's movement views on the issue of endowment at the end of the 1920s. At the same time, the reception of women's claims by the Commissioners and the interpretation of their demands for protection and recognition, reveals the paradoxical impact of their quest for the 'mother's reward'.

The submission from the NSW National Council of Women was placed before the Royal Commission by Isobel Fidler, tutor to women students at the University of Sydney and since 1912, convenor of the National Council's Education Standing Committee\[^{51}\]. She affirmed the Council's support for the introduction of child endowment, referring the Commission to the Children's Charter of the International Council of Women for a philosophical basis for endorsement\[^{52}\]. The 'Children's Charter' expressed the principle that every child was born with an inalienable

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49. National Council of Women, NSW, Biennial Reports, 1936–38, p. 3.
50. John Curtin was a former political journalist and from 1928 Labor member for the federal seat of Fremantle.
52. Argus, 30 November 1927, p. 20.
right to full physical, mental and spiritual development. While it was the privilege and duty of every parent to provide these opportunities for the child, in the event that they were unable or unwilling to discharge this trust, the responsibility devolved upon the state\(^\text{53}\). The Council's submission did not make any bald references to endowment as a 'mother's reward' or as conferring economic independence, though something of the kind seemed implicit in their affirmation of the need for child endowment. The Council viewed child endowment as inseparable from an alteration to the system of wage fixation. It argued the need for one system of wage fixation and endowment controlled by the Federal government and for a new domestic unit for federal wage fixation, based on a man and wife alone\(^\text{54}\). Fidler carefully explained that the Council's submission did not represent the unanimous opinion of its affiliated societies\(^\text{55}\). The Council had in fact been bitterly reproached by some of its affiliates for its endorsement.

One set of objections was put before the Royal Commission by Mrs A. Arnold, the Secretary of the Queensland branch of the Mothers' Union. In contrast to

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54. *Argus*, 30 November 1927, p. 20; *SMH*, 30 November 1927, p. 16.

55. *Argus*, 30 November 1927, p. 20.
the National Council's view of endowment as an aid to the preservation of family life, Mrs Arnold said that her Union was 'particularly against division of the family money which the child endowment scheme would result in ... it would cause family dissension and upset the home life'. The Mothers' Union opposed any scheme which would take a portion of the husband's wage and give it to the wife, thus taking control of family affairs from his hands. Many women, with good cause, dreaded measures which might further weaken the responsibility of the male breadwinner to his home and family. Direct provisions to mothers were depicted as a threat to traditional family relationships. By alleviating woman's economic dependence, and at the same time lightening the burden of the male workers' family responsibility, male work incentives might be undermined.

A number of witnesses who appeared before the Commission to oppose endowment returned repeatedly to consideration of the mother's role in alleviating family problems. Ethel Cohen, wife of a Nationalist member of parliament, prominent in the Australian Women's National League and representing the Victorian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, stated in her evidence before the Commission that intervention by her association


was seldom the direct result of poverty:

The main factors which have caused a condition of affairs calling for the society's intervention - drunkenness, gambling, domestic trouble, neglect and incompetency, lack of control on the part of the parents, desertion, criminal tendencies on the part of the children - might still have existed though there was in the beginning no actual lack of means.\textsuperscript{58}

In such circumstances she said, the payment of endowment would not alleviate family problems but on the contrary might even serve to aggravate them. Much better results would be obtained if more money and effort were spent mitigating the burden of the mother by making her more efficient as mother and housekeeper \ldots\textsuperscript{59}. The NSW Professional Women Workers' Association also suggested money would be better spent giving mothers a training in domestic economy and efficiency and improving housing. Although affiliated to the National Council of Women the Association viewed the Council's public support for endowment as an instance of 'overbearing impertinence' on the part of the Council's executive\textsuperscript{60}. The membership of the Professional Workers included nurses, teachers, journalists and other women employed in the public health and welfare fields. Its President, Grace Locke Scobie, was for many years a member of the State Children's Relief Board and an Inspector in the Department of Labour and

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\textsuperscript{58} SMH, 24 May 1928, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{60} Argus, 30 November 1927, p. 20; SMH, 29 November 1927, p. 11.
Industry. The Secretary, Annie Wilson, was a child welfare Inspector\textsuperscript{61}. The executive of the Association held to the belief that state 'assistance is sometimes necessary ... [but] an indiscriminate ladling out of monetary allowance would tend to increase rather than decrease the dependence of the individual upon the State' thus weakening 'national moral fibre'\textsuperscript{62}. Adela Pankhurst Walsh, the former Victorian socialist feminist, by 1928 had established her own organisation aimed at halting the class and sex war which she believed characterised Australian society. Walsh tendered a submission calling for assistance to families on incomes approximating the basic wage by tax exemptions, travel concessions, housing schemes, kindergartens, discounted medical and dental care, free ante-natal advice and subsidised maternity homes\textsuperscript{63}. The provision of such indirect benefits, she argued, would serve the dual purpose of giving the mother in the home added security, while maintaining the stability of power relationships within the family, and male work incentives.

\textsuperscript{61} For Grace Scobie see Lone Hand, 2 October 1920, p. 1; NSW Public Service Board, NSW Public Service List, Sydney, 1919; Annie Wilson: NSW Public Service Lists, 1919, 1929. For their involvement in the Professional Women Workers' Association see its 'Annual Reports' in The Women's Club, Annual Reports and Balance Sheets.


The authors of the Majority Report, Chairman O'Halloran, Ivor Evans and Stephen Mills, whilst not recommending child endowment, did suggest that 'if Child Endowment ... [was] established, the most suitable family unit to be adopted in determining the basic wage is man and wife'. Their specific intention in making this statement was to exclude 'the idea of treating the wife as a separate economic unit on the pay-roll of the State'. That idea they said, 'involves a claim that [it] is to the State that the woman renders a service in bearing a child, and it is to the State that she is justified in looking for sustenance and reward while she is doing the State's work'. If such an idea gained credence they suggested, 'a very powerful solvent' would be introduced into 'family life as we know it'. They were totally opposed to 'a scheme which would treat a mother as a salaried servant of the State, by virtue of her child-bearing'. The Majority Report agreed with the Mothers' Union that removal of financial responsibility for children would reduce parental 'incentive to effort' and with it the 'unity of interests' of parents.

Turning to considerations beyond the individual family unit, the three Commissioners went on to demolish the legal case for child endowment. They claimed that an essential pre-condition for the establishment of any scheme was the

64. Royal Commission on Child Endowment, 'Majority Report', pp. 1343-44.

65. Ibid., p. 1368.
Commonwealth government first obtaining full and exclusive power to control wage fixation and other industrial matters. This they held constitutionally impossible. Even if the Commonwealth did exercise these powers they maintained that the introduction of child endowment could only proceed alongside the reduction of the basic wage and elimination of all existing provisions for children. Finally, they did not accept the claim that child endowment was necessary due to the insufficiency of wages. The current basic wage system, they argued, already contained sufficient elements of child endowment to provide for all existing dependant children.\(^{66}\)

If the available wage pool was sufficient to maintain existing children, the authors of the Majority Report had still to account for the high level of family poverty revealed by their investigations. They did not go far to find the culprit.

The Majority Report was inclined to blame the mother for family distress. Its authors quoted at length from Scottish research which found that

Over-crowding, diet, and the family income, do not bear the relation to the state of nutrition of the child which is generally attributed to them. In other words, the saying that "what is wrong with the poor is poverty" is not confirmed by these investigators. The only factor which appears to have any significant relationship with the nutrition of the child is the character of the mother. Is she "efficient"? Is she a "good" mother? If so, then the child's growth and nutrition will be normal or above the average. The "inefficient" mother will have poorly nourished children.\(^{67}\)

\(^{66}\) Ibid., p. 1344.

\(^{67}\) Ibid., p. 1367.
While admitting 'inefficiency' was 'not to be taken as implying that in the majority of cases the mother was not desirous of doing her best for her children', the Commissioners placed overwhelming importance on the mother's ability to provide for the child regardless of the size of the family and its income. Infant morbidity and mortality were considered to be the result of maternal ignorance and inefficiency. The mother's knowledge and training in domestic economy, hygiene and food values, was considered to be the most important factor in adequately meeting family needs. Not surprisingly, they concluded that training in mothercraft, domestic economy and hygiene instruction constituted one of the key solutions to family poverty. The mother might not be considered eligible for a 'reward' for her work, even though it was onerous and of national significance, but she was still open to a range of recriminations if she failed to achieve the impossible and make ends meet on the husband's meagre wage.

In their Minority Report, Mildred Muscio and John Curtin challenged the Majority Report at nearly every point. A system of family allowances was a logical corollary of the 'living wage' doctrine where the wage was assessed to provide for a fixed family unit. An extension of indirect social services could

68. Ibid., p. 1345.
69. Ibid., p. 1366.
not meet the needs of large families; the basic wage provided at best a frugal standard of comfort for the accepted family unit. Family allowances should not be part of the system of wage fixation. They opted for a child endowment scheme which they claimed would preserve the male 'family wage' and provide a direct measure of relief to large families, but in advising benefits of $10 per child per year after the second child they were in effect tying wage and endowment together and reducing the family unit from five to four.

Muscio and Curtin rejected the argument that the problem of family poverty was the result of the inefficiency of mothers but they agreed that there was a definite need for the expansion of mothercraft and domestic science training for girls and suggested that such 'general training would help to make the factor of inefficiency in the home referred to by some witnesses more evident and more censurable where it did exist'. In the opening section of their report Muscio and Curtin stated their position on the argument regarding efficiency:

The provision of instruction in food values and housecraft generally is a most desirable one, and this national service should be within the reach of all girls ... such teaching will not provide the tools with which the mother is to do her work; at best it shows her how to use those tools well.

70. Ibid., 'Minority Report', pp. 1383-1405.
71. Ibid., p. 1383.
Muscio was clearly aware that the ideology of domestic efficiency placed unreasonable pressure on the isolated woman in the home. She and Curtin used the forum of the Royal Commission to argue the need for the extension of social services to mothers and the importance of training women for their vocation. They also emphasised the necessity of adequate income for, 'a family income that is too small for reasonable needs may help to produce the ill-effects that these services seek to correct.'\textsuperscript{72} They considered the best method of ensuring family welfare was to provide endowment, paid direct to the mother, who was 'on the whole, a better judge of the needs of the individual child than a staff of officials or technical experts dictating a standardised regime.'\textsuperscript{73}

While championing the mother's work role in the home, and carefully delimiting the extent of her agency in ensuring family welfare, Muscio and Curtin followed the Majority Report in rejecting the notion that family allowances would constitute a payment for motherhood. The practice of providing for the worker, his wife and dependant children was already established in the 'living wage'. To reduce the wage of male workers to a single rate would be 'neither socially desirable or economically workable'. The state would be unable

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., p. 1383.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., p. 1394.
to administer or finance an obligation to support children and their mothers. More importantly, such an arrangement would mean the removal of male responsibilities to wives and children. State payment for motherhood would 'revolutionize the organic unity of the family and involve a financial contract which the State would effect with wives and children in their individual right, apart from the husband and father.'

Recognition: Rewards and Recriminations

The family endowment debate opened for re-examination the question of the relationship between the work of women in the family and the general prosperity and welfare of the community. Partly as a result of the energetic labours of the women's movement, motherhood in the 1920s was allocated greater national consideration than in any preceding period. The elevated status which might flow from this public preoccupation eluded women. As Herself expressed the problem in 1928:

Parents, which really means mothers, are being constantly censured by people in authority for neglecting ... their children ... Who shall presume to say that she is failing in her duty? Cabinet Ministers, perhaps, wishing to evade certain issues, spare themselves mental effort, and put the blame on somebody for glaring evils in our social system by casting it in the teeth of the mothers. Poor mothers, they get blamed for everything!  

74. Ibid., p. 1392.

75. Herself, November 1928, p. II.
The hopes of improved status for women were undermined by accusations of neglect and inefficiency against mothers. Women reformers faced the dilemma that their own attempts to enforce normative standards of housewifery and motherhood heightened concern about the inefficiency of the average wife and mother, and led to the lack of good mothering being given as the reason for a host of social ills. Women remained dependent on the male breadwinner to fulfil a role which had become even more socially exacting and labour-intensive.

The women's movement in NSW and Victoria exhibited levels of understanding of the implications of endowment which were as various as its component members and organisations. Those supporting the introduction of endowment appreciated the beneficial effect on family poverty of the NSW scheme. Some saw the promise of a wider form of federal endowment policy as a step towards a more just recognition of the work of wives and mothers in the home, or as a necessary precondition for the introduction of a social wage for women undertaking domestic or childrearing responsibilities. Jessie Street, President of the Sydney Feminist Club, suggested a social insurance scheme to cover all citizens whether wage-earners, professional workers, of independent means or 'female unpaid workers'. Every worker, man or woman, was to receive a basic wage calculated on the needs of a single person while wives and children would receive benefits under the
social insurance scheme. Her object she stated, was to 'give greater economic security to families and a measure of economic independence to the wife', while at the same time removing the male 'living wage' concept which represented an 'almost insurmountable obstacle in the campaign for equal pay for women'. Her scheme was rejected by the Royal Commission on Child Endowment. The problem for women remained that it was the children's welfare which was the paramount consideration of the state and that the service performed by the mother was considered only in terms of its relationship to the welfare of the child. Many in the women's movement perceived this problem while also seeing the rights and welfare of mothers and children as inextricably linked. Not many questioned if advances for one group led inevitably to improvements for the other.

The Royal Commissioners paid as much attention to the responsibilities of women for population increase and the quality of the next generation as they had to women's social roles as housewives and mothers. In deciding to reject child endowment, one major justification used by the authors of the Majority Report was their belief that child endowment payments would probably stimulate 'the world-wide tendency to reduction in the

number of children in a family' and compound the problem of Australia's low birth-rate. They also argued that if endowment was introduced, the children who would benefit would become state assets, 'entering in a somewhat direct fashion into the national balance-sheet'. To protect this investment they suggested the need for 'some degree of selective control of candidates for marriage' to prevent the feeble-minded, defective or diseased from 'reproducing their species'. For good measure they added that even if child endowment was not accepted as policy a system of eugenic control of the population should be introduced.\(^78\)

The women's movement had given a significant measure of support to proponents of eugenics, believing that its preoccupation with the 'mothers of the nation' provided a base from which to pursue a more substantive acknowledgement of women's labours. In 1926 the Racial Hygiene Association was formed as a result of co-operation between the Women's League and the Women's Union of Service.\(^79\) It aimed to encourage voluntary limitation of family size by the use of birth-control in cases of disease, mental illness or economic hardship. It was also concerned with the prevention of venereal disease and the more controversial subjects of sterilisation and segregation of the 'unfit'.\(^80\)

The Racial Hygiene Association became an affiliate of the

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78. Ibid., p. 1359.
80. Racial Hygiene Association of NSW, Congress Report, 1929; Annual Reports 1928-29; 1930; 1931.
National Council of Women of NSW in 1928 and Mildred Muscio became a Vice-President. The adoption by the women's movement of aspects of eugenic theory ultimately back-fired to the disadvantage of mothers and women generally. The spread of eugenic ideas opened the way for attempts on the part of the state to exercise tighter controls over mothers and for a pseudo-scientific discrimination between mothers as to their respective fitness for parenthood. Bearing and rearing children would not be enough to merit assistance. Concepts of racial fitness were applied in the allocation of endowment with an ease ensured by the vagueness of eugenic categories, to discriminate against those mothers deemed 'socially inefficient' by the state. Although a wide-scale sterilisation of the 'unfit' was not adopted in Australia, the acceptance by part of the community, including some women reformers, of the need for state eugenic control remained disturbing for it was a policy which was both sexist in its demands for state control of procreation, and dangerously elitist in its desire to discriminate between fit and unfit parents. The activities of the women's movement in promoting uniform standards of domestic labour and mothering bore an important and often contradictory relationship to their search for rewards for wives and mothers. They failed to see the close link between acknowledging the housewife/mother's economic role and desiring its increased social control.


82. For the results of the application of endowment coupled with negative eugenics in one country see Gisela Bock, 'Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany: Motherhood, Compulsory Sterilization and the State', Signs, Vol. 8, no. 3, Spring 1983, pp. 400-21.
... in her training for professions ... less stress should be laid upon her possible competition with men's work than upon her special capacities for certain kinds of work in any field, and she should be encouraged to seek work along the lines of her special aptitudes, for it is now gaining recognition that by her nature many kinds of work can be done better by women than by men.  

By 1918 most of the tangible barriers to the participation of women in professional life in Australia had fallen. The universities of Melbourne and Sydney had opened their doors to women students in 1879 and 1881 respectively, although women seeking entrance to medicine at Melbourne had to wait until 1887 before their demand was met. An amendment to the Victorian Legal Practitioners Act in 1903 allowed women to practise law and in 1918, with the passage of the Women's Legal Status Act in NSW, this last barrier to aspiring female lawyers was also removed.  

By 1925 over a quarter of all students enrolled at Sydney and Melbourne University were women, with the majority of female students concentrated in Arts and the next largest group in Science and Medicine. Only a

1. Shepton Mallet, 'Vocational Training', The Woman, August 1918, p. 239.

minority of women braved the faculties of Law, Dentistry, Pharmacy and Architecture. The women's movement in both states provided sustained support for the opening of opportunities for women in established professions but, despite the lifting of legal barriers to women's training and employment in professional areas, and the existence of opportunities for women in 'feminine' careers, such as teaching and nursing, women reformers envisaged the need to develop new career opportunities. Their choice of areas to patronise and develop was influenced by several crucial considerations. It seemed essential in promoting new vocations for girl students that they obtained the benefits of a 'dual training': one which fitted them 'for earning a livelihood with efficiency, self-reliance and self-respect' but which would also prepare them 'for the making of a home and the potential vocation of motherhood'. A further implicit consideration was the need to develop careers in areas which would not constitute a substantial challenge to the employment opportunities of men. One solution seemed to be to search for employment which would incorporate women's 'special capacities' and which could easily be presented as an extension of woman's 'natural'


4. Mallet, 'Vocational Training', p. 239.
or 'traditional' activities. The arena of public health and welfare, which already engaged the reform interests of women's organisations and involved large numbers of women as voluntary workers, and some in a paid capacity, seemed ripe for development. In its attempts to encourage professional development in the welfare field the women's movement also began to consider the strategic significance of women as professional 'caretakers' and the influence they could exert on the organisation of social life.

The Domestic Scientist: A Contradiction in Terms?

... [with] domestic science education... we might have more recognition of our needs from architects, the Government and the community... better prospects for the future of the race... and an honoured position for domestic workers generally.5

The domestic science movement sought to bring rationality and national purpose to woman's domestic role. The housewife, mistress and servant were encouraged to review their labours in the light of scientific method. The aspirations of domestic science advocates, however, went further than this for they wished to couple scientific knowledge with domestic science theory and practice so that women could play a part in enlarging the domain of existing professions such as architecture, medicine and engineering. In addition, they wished to

develop their own discrete 'domestic' science which would prepare women for careers in research and management in the fields of public health and welfare. The key to their aspirations seemed to lie in the development of professional domestic science qualifications, preferably at the level of the university.

As early as 1910, Dr Edith Barrett, the Honorary Home Secretary of the National Council of Women of Victoria, recommended the introduction of 'household science' as a university subject. Over the following years the need for the establishment of university instruction in this as yet unformed discipline increasingly engaged the Councils' attention. In 1913 a deputation of one hundred prominent citizens, including W.A. Osborne, the Professor of Physiology at the University of Melbourne, and Dr Edith Barrett, met with Sir Alexander Peacock, the Minister of Education, to press for the establishment of a domestic science degree at the university. In support of their request the deputation instanced the establishment in 1912 of the Home Science Department at Otago University in New Zealand. Otago was frequently mentioned as a model for the development of professional domestic science education. Its Home Science Department offered a diploma course of three years for students wishing to become teachers in the field and a four year degree course, taken partly at the medical school, for those wishing to proceed to research and study in areas such as biochemistry

8. Docherty, The Emily Mac, p. 43.
and food nutrition.  

The Otago course in turn was closely modelled on American developments in Home Science education. By the turn of the century, an increasing number of American women's colleges were offering home science strands in 'household bacteriology' or 'sanitary chemistry'. The University of Chicago also offered a course in 'Household Technology' while Massachusetts Institute of Technology conferred a degree in 'Domestic Engineering'. American home economics educators recognised the need for the development of a tiered system of home economics education. Elementary domestic skills plus some home science would be taught at all education levels, from kindergarten to college, but professional training would be the keystone for its development and dissemination. University qualified domestic scientists became teachers of their discipline but it was also envisaged that professional training would be provided within these courses for social workers, health inspectors, sanitary engineers and for new professional 'Household Engineers', who would administer the domestic affairs of large public institutions.


11. Ibid.; Barbara Ehrenreich and Deidre English, For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women, London, 1979, Ch. 5.
The University of Sydney resisted the development of these new courses. In 1916 Kate Dwyer, newly appointed to the Senate, called for a Chair of Domestic Science which the Faculty of Science opposed. In 1918, on the motion of James Nangle, Superintendent of Technical Education in NSW, the Senate approved a Bachelor of Science in Domestic Science (B.Sc.Dom.) at the University of Sydney. The Senate apparently bowed to pressure from two separate interest groups. On one hand representatives from the Department of Education were eager to establish a closer association between teacher preparation and university training. A university degree in domestic science would raise the status of domestic science teachers and presumably the level of their classroom instruction to pupils. The influence of the Department of Education was strengthened by the lobbying activities of the Women's Progressive Association (of which Kate Dwyer was a prominent member) and the National Council of Women. Both organisations had participated in women's deputations on the issue to the education authorities from 1907. While sharing this concern with the education of teachers and pupils, the women's associations' interest in domestic science involved additional considerations. In an address to the Women's

12. University of Sydney, Senate Minutes, University of Sydney Archives, G1/1/15, 4 December 1916; 19 November 1917; Faculty of Science Minutes, University of Sydney Archives, G3/3/2, 27 November 1918.

13. University of Sydney, Senate Minutes, 16 December 1918; 3 March 1919.

Section of the Workers' Educational Association in 1920, Kate Dwyer described the urgent need for 'trained women, with scientific knowledge of domestic management, and of personal and public hygiene'. She was not explicit about the actual areas of employment that would absorb the new domestic scientists but, as a director of a number of public charities, including the Benevolent Society and the Royal Hospital for Women, she felt sure that for 'social work of an organising character such purely scientific and applied scientific training that a Domestic Science course would provide, was invaluable ...'.

The Sydney Morning Herald, commenting in 1919 on the inauguration of the B.Sc.Dom., hastened to assure its readers that the 'teaching of this science is not going to turn the halls of learning into glorified kitchens and laundries'. On the contrary, while scope was to be given to practical instruction in housewifery techniques, the larger part of the student's efforts were to be geared to the study and application of science to the household and civic environment. Despite the lobbying efforts of Dwyer and the Women's Progressive Association, neither a Chair nor a separate School of Domestic Science accompanied the offering of this course. Instead, domestic science students were to complete the three year Bachelor

16. Ibid.
17. SMH, 24 March 1919, p. 5.
of Science degree, taking subjects in areas such as physics, chemistry, physiology, botany and geology. In conjunction with a science degree they were also to attend lectures and sit for certain exams prescribed for the University's Diploma of Public Health. Their studies in this area covered a wide range of public health factors including meteorology, air and ventilation, soil, the water supply, the classification and preservation of food, sanitary engineering, disease prevention, occupational and industrial health, the compilation and use of statistics, public health law and economics. Finally, the aspiring domestic scientist had to attend lectures and pass exams in Stage I and II of the teachers' course in domestic science at the Sydney Technical College. There the more practical aspect of training was to be pursued with classes in cooking, laundry work, home hygiene, dressmaking and home nursing.

Much was made of the occupational variety open to the qualified domestic expert and the peculiar suitability of such employment to the career-minded woman. While the majority of Domestic or 'Home Science' graduates would become teachers, the university degree was also seen as a grounding for professional careers in other areas such as nursing and social work. Such a course would

18. University of Sydney, Calendar ... for the Year 1919, Sydney, 1919, pp. 94, 215.
19. Ibid.
qualify the nurse 'for the more highly skilled and administrative positions' in her profession, while the woman interested in social service finds the knowledge gained in the Home Science Department is of value, for the problems she would disentangle are frequently those of an ill-organised home or of social mal-adjustment'.

The result would be the creation of new occupational categories in large institutions such as hospitals, charitable homes, hostels and schools. For instance the 'hospital dietitian and the food supervisor of institutions' would require a considerable knowledge of 'Food Chemistry and of Dietetics, subjects which are intensively studied in a Home Science course'.

While a university degree in domestic science could provide employment for women, and valuable 'expert' services in the health and welfare field, it also embodied a complementary benefit for the individual student and the community. The YWCA pointed out that this training,

In one respect ... has the advantage over all other university courses; it not only provides the avenue to several professional careers, but at the same time it is an excellent training for the home maker. The girl who marries commences home life with knowledge which otherwise would only be acquired by years of experience.

21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
The role of professional 'caretaker' they suggested, could easily be converted on marriage to fit the family's need for care.

Emboldened by the successful inauguration of the B.Sc.Dom. at the University of Sydney, the National Council of Women began to agitate for the establishment of similar courses at other universities\(^ {23} \). The Victorian Council wanted the diploma at the College of Domestic Economy upgraded. Brenda Sutherland was Principal of the Melbourne College from 1917 to 1924. In contrast to her predecessor, who was trained at the Sydney Technical College, Sutherland had a B.Sc. (University of Melbourne, 1908) and an M.Sc. in Home Science from the University of Toronto, Canada\(^ {24} \). At her suggestion, short courses were introduced in dietetics, organic chemistry and food preservation with the aim of developing professional qualifications for domestic scientists as institutional managers and as dietitians. She was encouraged by a number of women on the College Council who had already pioneered various positions for women in the fields of public health and welfare. The president of the College Council from 1917 to 1919 was Dr Jean S. Greig, an early woman medical graduate of the University of

\(^ {23} \) The Woman, March 1922, p. 14; Argus, 21 January 1922, p. 19.

\(^ {24} \) Docherty, The Emily Mac, pp. 48-49, 57.
Melbourne (1895) and the first woman to be awarded its Diploma of Public Health (1910). In 1910 she was also one of the first three medical officers appointed by the Victorian Education Department. Also on the College Council were Margaret Cuthbertson, factory inspector and from 1920 industrial welfare supervisor, Dr Constance Ellis, pathologist at the Queen Victoria Hospital and Dr Ethel Osborne, industrial hygienist. Several Councillors also held positions on the National Council of Women.

In 1927 the Domestic Economy college course made lectures in dietetics available in the first year of the diploma of Domestic Science and, following a further restructuring of courses at the end of the decade, diploma students intending to train as hospital dietitians undertook courses in biology, biochemistry, bacteriology, physiology and 'dietotherapy'. In 1929 the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne appointed its first dietitian, Mabel Flanley, who had qualified at an American University and in 1930 two Domestic College graduates were appointed as her assistants. The diploma course was again restructured in 1933 to increase the time spent on

25. Ruth Campbell and J. Barton Hack, 'Jane Stocks Greig ...' ADB, Vol. 9; Hutton Neve, This Mad Folly, p. 147; Docherty, The Emily Mac, p. 298.


dietetic studies. In 1938 a postgraduate Diploma of Dietetics was introduced by the University and the College's diploma was recognised as a qualification for entry. The professional standing and rewards of dietetic work remained uncertain in this period. A few university science graduates took the postgraduate course but they were financially disadvantaged compared with other paramedical science graduates. Their wages board ruled that, as the majority of Victorian dietitians were college diplomates or nurses, the salary should be set at an appropriately lower level.

In NSW only one woman, Doris Williams, had completed the B.Sc.Dom. (in 1928) although the National Council of Women worked hard to popularise it. The notion of the university trained domestic scientist was frequently aired at public meetings, lectures and conferences. The Association of Headmistresses was asked to encourage girls to consider the domestic science degree and the Sydney University Women Graduates' Association listed domestic science amongst the professional courses, such as medicine, pharmacy and dentistry,

31. Only one other woman graduated from the course until it was withdrawn in 1964. University of Sydney, *Calendar ... for the Year 1964*, Sydney, 1964.
showcased at its annual vocations conference for girls. The National Council of Women blamed the university for failing to promote the degree. Its repeated requests for a Chair in Domestic Science were ignored. There were problems from the beginning in the scope and structure of the course. Like the concept of the 'domestic scientist', it was too eclectic and diffuse, spread as it was across the science faculty of the University, the Public Health diploma class and the Sydney Technical College course. The 'domestic scientist' was not a recognised occupational category. The difficulty was to find a market for the qualifications.

While the B.Sc.Dom. did not provide a specialised training in such fields as dietetics, it was envisaged that the classes taken by students under the Public Health Diploma would equip them to enter work in this field. The prerequisite for gaining the full Diploma of Public Health, however, was the possession of a medical practitioner's qualifications. Graduates would then enter employment as Medical Officers of Health in business and government. The best that the domestic science student could hope to achieve was less rewarding work as assistants to these officers. By the mid-1920s, with the co-operation and encouragement of the National


34. e.g. see National Council of Women, NSW, Minutes, 28 October 1926.
Council of Women, a scheme was already in operation at East Sydney Technical College to train nurses in public health work. The nurses received the same diplomas as health inspectors and found employment in the State Public Health and Education Departments and in the City Council. The domestic science degree was costly, time-consuming and complex, and duplicated skills which were already learnt by experience or in the established courses for other professions.

By lobbying for domestic science courses at the university level and promoting specialist training in college courses, the women's movement and its professional allies aimed to have an impact far beyond the mere teaching and practice of good housewifery. While it was frequently noted that a university course in 'domestic' science offered some reconciliation of the disturbing conflict between professional work for women and notions of truly 'feminine' endeavour, this aspect of their strategy eventually took a secondary position. The supporters of professional domestic science training aimed to set up a new gender-based science of 'domestic science' which would allow women input into other male-dominated sciences and professions and which would forge new female professions. In an age of increasing specialisation, however, the wide range of roles that domestic science...
science intended to encompass, from the industrial chemist to the institutional manager, which mirrored the 'jack-of-all-trades' designation of the housewife, rendered this strategy untenable. Professional domestic science training came too late, with laudable but ill-defined goals and with the unfortunate heritage of woman's unpaid and unrecognised labours in the home and community as the basis for its proposed development.

With a 'kindly heart' and a 'trained mind':
Professionalising Social Work

The old tradition that the equipment of a social welfare worker was complete if he or she had sincerity of purpose and a kindly heart is not acceptable ... In an age of specialisation social workers must keep pace with other organised occupations. They need training, a knowledge of the sciences embraced in economics, psychology, and sociology, as well as the desire to serve their time and generation. 37

The advocates of professional domestic science training envisaged that their course would provide the welfare worker with the necessary scientific training in areas such as nutrition, sanitation and institutional management to allow them to efficiently carry out their tasks of ministering to the health and welfare needs of the community. By the end of the 1920s the women's

37. SMH, 26 October 1925, p. 12.
movement, in alliance with a range of professional men and women, succeeded in introducing a specialist course of training in social work theory and practice which opened the way for the professionalisation of woman's 'caretaker' role.

In the 1920s, the growing complexity of industrial society and the increasing range of available professional knowledge in the fields of medicine, psychology and psychiatry, encouraged certain groups to intensify their demands for the training of social workers. Despite the increasing criticism of the voluntary or untrained welfare worker in this period it was still accepted that women were better fitted by nature to undertake this work. In 1919, at a conference on the 'Girl of To-day' staged by the Melbourne YWCA in conjunction with the Student Christian Movement, Professor Meredith Atkinson pointed out that 'works of benevolence and reform are being thoroughly well-organized; they have an art and technique of their own'. He went on to note that although 'girls ... [were] better fitted by nature than boys for work of social upliftment ... [they were] far less fitted by training'.

While male professionals and academics repeated their calls for the development of professional courses for social workers, the YWCA provided the only training available. The Association's National Training School, first instituted in Australia in 1912, sought to add structure to the efforts of voluntary welfare workers but also represented a 'serious endeavour to make the

secretariat a profession in the highest sense'. The recognition of social service as a career, requiring specialised training, the Association counselled, was 'the first step towards its recognition in the Universities as a subject worthy of consideration'.

The Association brought to its training the latest overseas experience. Mary Dingman, the World Secretary of the YWCA was in Australia in 1923 organising conferences and meetings for aspiring and established welfare workers. In Sydney she met with over thirty women working as factory inspectors, trade union organisers and welfare officers in business and industry and lectured at the University on 'Student Industrial Co-operation'. A 'businessman's conference' on the 'Human Factor in Industry' concluded with a resolution that the University provide training for social welfare workers. When Dingman left Australia at the end of the year she was accompanied by Eleanor Hinder. Hinder had obtained twelve months study leave from her position as welfare supervisor for Farmers Ltd to undertake research into industrial welfare programs in other countries. During her year away she attended the

39. Ibid., June 1920, p. 3.
41. Ibid., September 1923, p. 2.
42. Ibid., November 1923, p. 15.
43. Ibid., March 1924, p. 11.
international conferences of the YWCA and the Federation of University Women. She also participated in a meeting of welfare workers staged by the International Labour Organisation in Geneva. On her return to Australia she gave evidence to the Commonwealth Royal Commission on Health and to the Curriculum Committee of the Faculty of Economics at the University of Sydney, emphasising the need for social work training along the lines of those courses already operating in Britain and America.\(^{44}\)

The National Council of Women took up this issue of social work training for women. By offering a public forum to a range of 'experts' concerned with matters of public education, health and welfare, the Council had always constituted an intelligence network for women reformers and charity workers. In the latter half of the 1920s the National Council in Sydney began to offer a more formal approach to information exchange on social studies. In 1927, Isabel Fidler, a tutor at the University of Sydney and the convenor of the Council's Education Committee, organised a short course of lectures in 'social hygiene', biology, psychology, 'sexual hygiene' and medicine through the Universities Extension Board. For a fee of 10/- teachers and welfare workers could attend lectures by Dr Harvey Sutton, Principal Medical Officer of the Department of Education, Professor Launcelot Harrison of the University's Department of

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Zoology and Dr A.H. Martin, a lecturer in Psychology. Isabel Fidler and other Council members believed a more comprehensive, university-based training was needed for social workers. Fidler (1869-1952), tutor to women students since 1900 and an executive member of the Sydney University Women's Settlement saw the Settlement as 'an opportunity for first-hand study of social and economic conditions' and a way of promoting an awareness amongst students of the obligations of the university-trained woman to the community. She was convinced of the value of academic study in confronting the underlying causes of social 'problems' and on her initiative, in October 1927, the Education Committee of the National Council of Women met to consider the establishment of a professional course for social workers.

Lady MacCallum, then President of the National Council of Women, pursued this idea with members of staff and in collaboration with Professors Mackie, Radcliffe-Brown, Mills and Tasman Lovell, Dr Martin and F.A. Bland, drew up a course of study. Practical

45. National Council of Women, NSW, Minutes, 26 May 1927; 30 June 1927.
46. ADB, Vol. 9; University of Sydney Settlement Records, S32, Cuttings and Scrapbooks.
47. R.J. Lawrence, Professional Social Work in Australia, Canberra, 1965, p. 34.
48. Board of Social Study and Training, University of Sydney Archives, S29, Minutes, Box 1, 6 June 1928.
training to supplement the theoretical course was considered at a conference attended by representatives of the Royal Alexandria and Royal Prince Alfred Hospitals, the Presbyterian and Church of England Boards, the City Health Department and NSW Child Welfare Department, the Royal Society for the Welfare of Mothers and Babies, the Sydney Day Nursery Association, the NSW Baby Health Centres, the YWCA, the Royal Sanitary Institute and the National Council of Women. The Board of Social Study and Training was formed in 1928 with representation from these organisations. In 1929 training commenced under the directorship of Blanka Buring, Honorary Secretary of the Board and a former convenor of the National Council of Women's Education Committee.

The National Council of Women made the training of the social worker its theme for 'Health Week' that year. Moralism and sympathy were no longer a sufficient response to social ills:

Kindness of heart is not enough.
To cure such ills, to understand how far they are due to an imperfect social system, or to individuals themselves we must have accurate information about the conditions which produce physical or mental breakdowns.


50. SMH, 23 October 1929, p. 8.
Dr A.H. Martin, a member of the new Board of Social Study and Training, explained that social workers now needed 'a trained mind as well as a kindly heart' to work with best effect. The training provided by the Board included lectures in economics, social and industrial psychology, psychiatry, social legislation and administration, hygiene, dietetics, first aid and home nursing. The knowledge acquired in the classroom was joined to the principles and practice of casework theory, learnt in the field under the supervision of the established welfare agencies on the Board.

It was envisaged that students completing the course would be qualified to enter employment in charitable relief agencies, the public health service, industrial welfare departments, settlements and playgrounds and hospital social service bureaux and to undertake correctional work as women police, prison and probation officers and juvenile court officials. The advocates of social work training also wished to bring welfare services into line with the new 'scientific' age. They suggested that graduates could perform important services by regulating voluntary provisions and rationalising existing welfare agencies. One of the first projects started by the Board was the compilation of a Directory of Social Agencies, finally published

51. Ibid., 26 October 1929, p. 12.
53. Ibid.
in 1933\textsuperscript{54}. To eliminate indiscriminate or ill-adviced relief provision, long range plans were also launched to compile a central index of charitable cases\textsuperscript{55}.

In the same year that the NSW Board of Social Study and Training began its operations, a more specialised form of social work training was introduced in Melbourne. Sponsorship for the professional training of medical social workers, or almoners, emanated from a similar mixture of voluntary and professional workers as in Sydney but with the more concerted push coming from those involved with or working in the public hospitals. Several influential 'charity managers' participated in the development of the professionally trained almoner. Mabel Brookes\textsuperscript{56}, the president of the Queen Victoria Hospital for Women and Children had originally taken over a committee position on the Children's Hospital from her mother Alice Emerton. She recalled in her memoirs that Alice 'did not like hospital work. The sight of illness upset her and she

\textsuperscript{54} Board of Social Study and Training, Minutes, 10 August 1928; Directory of Social Agencies of Sydney - Board of Social Study and Training of NSW, n.d. [1933].

\textsuperscript{55} Board of Social Study and Training, Minutes, August 10 1928.

\textsuperscript{56} Mabel Brookes was the wife of Norman Brookes, tennis champion, grazier and Chairman of Directors of Australian Paper Mills. Her sister-in-law, Ivy Brookes, was the founder of the Victorian Housewives' Association and a member of the Board of the Women's Hospital in Melbourne for over fifty years. See Dame Mabel Brookes, Memoirs, Sydney, 1974; Who's Who in the World of Women, Melbourne, 1930; Ivy and Herbert Brookes papers, 'Guide to Brookes Papers', ANL.
became unduly affected, but it was a case of conscience or disinclination and conscience won for a time.\textsuperscript{57}

Mabel, on the other hand, wholeheartedly enjoyed the experience and went on to the Queen Victoria where she was President from 1923 to 1969\textsuperscript{58}. In 1927, having observed the work of trained almoners on a visit to Britain, Brookes began lobbying for the introduction of a course of medical social work in Melbourne's hospitals. She was supported by Constance Kent Hughes, a former nurse who had been actively involved in the establishment at the Melbourne Hospital of a Social Service Bureau, and by public servants like R.J. Love, the Secretary of the Victorian Charities Board\textsuperscript{59}. A Central Almoners' Council was established in March 1929 and Agnes Macintyre, a British-trained almoner, was appointed to Melbourne Hospital. She became director of Training for the Victorian Institute of Almoners\textsuperscript{60}.

A general social service training was also under consideration by the National Council of Women. In 1927 a new affiliate to the Victorian Council was the Social Science Students' Society, formed at the conclusion of a series of lectures on social science and

\textsuperscript{57} Brookes, \textit{Memoirs}, p. 11.

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 141.

\textsuperscript{59} O'Brien and Turner, 'Voluntary and Professional Welfare Roles', p. 2.

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 3; Lawrence, \textit{Professional Social Work}, p. 35; \textit{Who's Who in the World of Women}, Melbourne, 1930.
'social ills' organised by Eleanor Glencross in co- 
operation with the University of Melbourne. The National 
Council, of which Glencross was then President, called 
on the Federal Conference of Women's Councils to press 
for the creation of Chairs of Social Science in all 
universities. After several unsuccessful attempts, 
a committee from the Victorian Council for Mental Hygiene, 
the Institute of Almoners, the Charity Organisation 
Society, the Central Council of Benevolent Societies and 
the National YWCA, persuaded the University of Melbourne 
to undertake social work training. The Victorian Council 
for Social Training was launched in 1933 to oversee the 
course.

Aspiring social work students needed more than 
a 'kindly heart' to gain entry to the new courses in 
Melbourne and Sydney. Educational qualifications, 
practical experience, the possession of suitable personal 
references, performance in interviews and at least 
initially, success in the 'personality' test 'scientifically' administered by Dr A.H. Martin, the Director 
of the Institute of Industrial Psychology were requirements. There were 
several unstated qualifications for entrance. Students

61. SMH, 22 October 1927.
62. Argus, 2 July 1927, p. 27.
63. Lawrence, Professional Social Work, pp. 36-37.
64. Board of Social Study and Training, Minutes, 1930-34.
needed the private means, or family support, to enter into a fairly lengthy and costly period of training. In addition, although it was never expressly stated by the course convenors, social work was to be the domain of women. Unlike any other professional training course, the literature stressed the preparation of graduates not only for salaried positions but also for voluntary work. The first intake were all women with work experience in welfare agencies, public health or education. The men and women involved in professionalising social work shared a faith in the validity and efficacy of skills acquired through higher study and an optimistic belief in the ability of qualified social workers to emerge as leaders in the development and promotion of new preventive social services. The women's movement saw an important strategic role for the trained social worker in the public sphere. As an extension of the role already forged by voluntary or untrained women in the welfare field, the professional social worker, with the advantage of 'expert' status, would be an effective lobbyist for reforms long sought by women. In addition, by moving into positions of authority in the field of community

65. Ibid., 6 July 1928.

66. Ibid., Executive Meeting, 19 February 1929. Amongst the first intake of students in Sydney there were three teachers and four nurses, of whom two were employed by the Public Health Department and the remaining two by the Rachel Forster Hospital and the Tresillian Home respectively. Of the remaining students the experience or occupation listed included welfare worker in the Prince Alfred Hospital Social Service Department, Secretary of the Sydney Day Nursery Association, Captain of the Girl Guides, and Secretary of the National Association for the Prevention and Cure of Consumption. With the exception of Mrs N. Ryan, a teacher, all the candidates for training were single.
health and welfare, she could effectively reclaim a sphere of expertise which was woman's before the rise of the established male-dominated professions.

Child Welfare: 'most essentially a woman's work'

In 1934 a Royal Commission on the NSW Child Welfare Department was set up following allegations about brutality and mismanagement. J.E. McCulloch, a stipendiary magistrate, was appointed commissioner. Witnesses called included voluntary child welfare workers, female inspectors and trained social workers. Possibly all agreed with Annie Golding, a former members of the State Children's Relief Board, when she told the Commission that child welfare work was 'most essentially a woman's work'. However, a certain shift had occurred in the women's movement. While Annie Golding and the women inspectors continued to call for an expansion of duties for those women already employed in the Department, on the grounds that women employees could bring a 'natural' delicacy and sympathy to the work, the representatives of the new breed of qualified social worker called for 'scientifically trained' staff and an extension of services to incorporate the woman social worker in a new team of child welfare professionals.


68. Ibid., 6/1781, p. 144.
Despite an enduring community belief that women were more generally suited and committed to child welfare than men, the traditional authority of women in this field had been progressively undermined from the end of the nineteenth century. Judith Godden, in her study of women and philanthropy in NSW in the late nineteenth century, depicted the 1880s as the apogee of acceptance of the philanthropic ladies' right to influence, if not control, welfare efforts directed at other women and children. In 1881, as a result of the lobbying activities of these ladies, the NSW State Children's Relief Board replaced the harsh barrack-style accommodation of destitute and neglected children with a scheme of subsidised foster-care or 'boarding-out'. The majority of the Board's first executive were women and honorary 'lady visitors' were appointed to monitor the moral education and physical welfare of boarded-out children. The establishment of Children's Courts in NSW in 1905 and Victoria in 1907, saw a further group of women appointed as honorary probation officers. Many were drawn from the organisations, including the Mothers' Union, the WCTU and the National


70. Sabine Willis, 'Made to be Moral - at Parramatta Girls' School, 1898-1923' in Roe, Twentieth Century Sydney, p. 184.
Council of Women, which had first agitated for a separate system of juvenile correction. Because women were considered to be naturally suited to supervise children and more especially girls, no provision was made for training the 'lady visitors' from the Board or the Courts.

In 1918 women were still being appointed as honorary Board members while a smaller group were also employed in state institutions and as inspectors, although seldom in senior positions. However, even this tenuous position of influence was under challenge. The increasing need felt for state intervention and responsibility in this field saw the gradual relegation of women to less influential roles in the care of state children and their replacement by predominantly male public servants. The process culminated in 1923 with the abolition of the State Children's Relief Board and the replacement of its honorary members by the administrators of the State Child Welfare Department. From 1923 women inspectors were no longer sent to country districts to supervise boarded-out children. May Mathews reported that official justifications for this restriction were that women did

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72. Willis notes that the Industrial School for Girls at Parramatta first opened in 1887, always had a male supervisor. Sabine Willis, 'Purified at Parramatta: The Industrial School for Girls' in Radi and Mackinolty, In Pursuit of Justice, p. 78.

not like to travel, to drive cars or to stay alone in hotels - all reasons she classified as 'absurd'. She had accepted country work unquestioningly on her appointment to the inspectorial staff in 1916 and she resented withdrawal of the work for its adverse effects on her promotion prospects. Annie Golding, formerly with the State Children's Relief Board and a long-standing advocate of the need for women in public positions, demanded an end to such restrictions because women 'were closer to a child's mind', more conscientious than men and adolescent girls could not 'confide in a man inspector and properly so'. Annie Wilson, first appointed an inspector in 1910, contended that investigation and administration of applications for assistance from women deserted by their husbands, or with invalid husbands, was 'surely women's work'. Sometimes matters of an intimate nature had to be discussed. Existing women officers


75. Annie Golding, with her sisters Belle Golding (a former senior inspector under the Factories and Shops Act) and Kate Dwyer, played a major role in the campaigns of the Women's Progressive Association, between 1902 and 1918, to win access for women to public roles as lawyers, jurors, justices of the peace, police and prison officers. See Judith Allen, 'Breaking Into the Public Sphere', pp. 112-14.

76. Ibid., p. 112.


78. Ibid., p. 64.
also implied that there were deficiencies in the treatment of female state wards, including inadequate medical and mental testing of girls before the Children's Court, substandard conditions at the Glebe Shelter for girls and a lack of vocational training and after-care for girls in State homes. At this time only eleven of the forty-seven inspectors employed by the Child Welfare Department were women \(^79\). Repeatedly in the testimony of the women officers can be seen a desire to reclaim certain areas of work from male officers.

This call was taken up by a number of other witnesses before the Royal Commission. Mildred Muscio, appearing in her capacity as President of the National Council of Women, asked for the appointment of a woman doctor at the Glebe Girls' Shelter and that all officials inspecting or examining girls in the control of the Department be women \(^80\). She commended the 'kind hearts' of her own sex while also championing 'trained minds'. The Child Welfare Department, she said, should 'avail itself to the utmost of modern psychological knowledge, especially in the training of those in direct control or supervision of the children under its care' \(^81\). Muscio taught psychology to Extension classes at the University of Sydney. She advised the Commission that officers


\(^80\). Royal Commission on Child Welfare, Transcripts, 6/1780, pp. 948, a-c.

\(^81\). \textit{Ibid.}, p. 948b.
trained in the new science of psychology could recognise the child deprived of crucial 'psychological requirements' and humanise procedures in the Department by inculcating an attitude which accepted that, 'to use fear and severity as instruments is to increase psychological damage'.

Muscio was a Vice-President of the Board of Social Study and Training and obviously envisaged that the requisite scientific understanding of the child mind could best be supplied by completion of a professional social work course. Psychologists had been influential in the establishment of the Board and in the instruction given its students. The Board's President from 1928 to 1937 was Professor Tasman Lovell, the first Professor of Psychology at the University of Sydney. The inflow of psychological theory into the study and practice of social work at this time, according to one contemporary student, 'produced a great feeling of enthusiasm about social casework and optimism about its effectiveness'. The new knowledge could be deployed preventively, it was thought, to arrest problems at an early stage. No officers from the Child Welfare Department had taken advantage of the professional social workers course and a

82. Ibid.
83. Lawrence, Professional Social Work, p. 45.
small but growing pool of graduates, with training in psychology and casework, awaited placement. When the Secretary of the Child Welfare Department said the current award practically confined appointments, as inspector, to men in the educational, professional and clerical sections of the public service, the Commissioner commented that 'this is the moment to consider whether it should remain',\textsuperscript{86} At the Commissioner's prompting Aileen Fitzpatrick, Director of the Board of Social Study and Training since 1931\textsuperscript{87}, stated categorically that the employment of untrained personnel in child welfare and social work generally, was not only ill-advised but

\begin{quote}
Extremely dangerous because there might be the quality of good will unaccompanied by skill and there might be the desire to find the solution to one's own personality troubles through the difficulties of others ...\textsuperscript{88}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., p. 851.

\textsuperscript{87} Aileen Fitzpatrick was the director of the Board from 1931 to 1940. On appointment she had a B.A. in Classics and teaching experience in this subject. She did not hold social work qualifications but had been a member of the National Council of Women and General Secretary, for three years, of the Country Women's Association of NSW. Lawrence, \textit{Professional Social Work}, pp. 50-51.

\textsuperscript{88} Royal Commission on Child Welfare, Transcripts, 6/1780.
Both Muscio and Fitzpatrick, along with other members of the Board of Social Study and Training, were foundation members of the Child Guidance Council of NSW. Several Board members, including Professor Tasman Lovell and Mildred Muscio, had first hand knowledge of the child guidance movement in America and Britain. In consultation with doctors, teachers and welfare workers the Child Guidance Council was formed in 1933 to educate the community on the expert help needed for the 'nervous' or 'difficult' child and to seek funding for a child guidance clinic. In turn the Clinic would offer its services to the Child Welfare Department. As Mary Davis, Secretary of the Child Guidance Council explained, it would be a place where children exhibiting behavioural problems could be brought for examination and treatment by their parents or by the Child Welfare or Education authorities. In particular she stressed the advantages of such a clinic to the magistrates in the children's courts. The present inspectors and honorary probation officers could be effectively replaced by the new team of medical and social work experts. The social worker would investigate the home life of the child, a medical officer would inspect the child for physical defects and the psychologist and psychiatrist would apply mental tests, assess the child's mental state and analyse its unconscious motives. Their reports could then be

89. Board of Social Study and Training, Annual Report, 1934, pp. 6-7.

furnished to the presiding magistrate who could thus make 'an informed judgement with the aid of scientific evidence. It was envisaged that the resulting judgement would be, in most cases, to release the child on probation so that it could continue to receive treatment at the clinic. By these means Davis claimed, the work of the Children's Court would be lessened and pressure on the state's institutions for delinquent children relieved. More importantly, the successfully treated child would become a 'Useful Citizen' and this meant a 'Saving to the State in cash and in man-power' 91.

A case was clearly made for a place in the public service for the professionally trained female caretaker. Commissioner McCulloch recommended specialised training be required for Child Welfare personnel but the Department was slow to make changes 92. Sex suspicion compounded the problem for the graduates in Social Work. The Directors of the training courses in Sydney and Melbourne were women and the majority of social work graduates continued to be women. While tangible problems existed concerning the restrictions on women's employment in the public service, a far deeper resistance remained to the admittance of women into the public-policy making realms of the service. In June 1938 representatives of the Public Service Board and the Board of Social Study and Training met to determine changes in appointments to the Child

91. Ibid., p. 120/2.
Welfare Department. A cadetship system was introduced for new appointees and the Board of Social Study arranged a scheme of extension lectures for existing officers. This was at last recognition by the authorities and the wider community that child welfare constituted a 'professional career'. While the Child Guidance Council never succeeded in establishing its own clinic, in 1939 Dr Irene Sebire, one of its members and convenor of the National Council of Women's Child Welfare Committee, was appointed Psychiatrist to the Child Welfare Department's newly-established Child Guidance Clinic. Eileen Carrothers B.A., one of the first graduates of the Board of Social Study and Training course (1932) was appointed as the Clinic's social worker.

Women and Professional Power

There was rapidly growing among men a jealousy of women's work, and a refusal to allow them a share in positions of power and responsibility. There were many activities in which women were engaged and as far as the spade work was concerned women were allowed a free hand in all social welfare work, in charity, politics and religion, but when it came to positions of real power and responsibility opposition was shown at once.

93. Board of Social Study and Training, Report ... 1939-40, p. 7.
94. Ibid., p. 17.
95. Ibid., p. 10.
96. Jessie Henderson, President's Address, National Council of Women, Victoria, Minutes, 22 March 1923.
When Jessie Henderson (1866-1951) spoke in these angry terms in her Presidential address to the annual meeting of the National Council of Women of Victoria, she was expressing frustrations cumulating from thirty years of voluntary work. Shortly after her marriage in 1891, Henderson joined the local Hawthorn Ladies' Benevolent Society and remained active despite the births of six children. In 1921, when her youngest child was three years old, she also joined the Melbourne District Nursing Society of which she was later to be President for twenty-four years (1923-1947). Her activities in both these organisations alerted her to the process under way of co-option of women's efforts and redirection of their goals by the state in co-operation with the rising numbers of professional medical experts. In 1911-13 she participated in a successful campaign by the National Council of Women for the representation of women on the Victorian Charities Board to be written into legislation. She lost the battle to have health centres set up under the control of the District Nursing Society and women's voluntary welfare agencies. The Baby Clinics established instead offered advice, not treatment, and were staffed by Health Department nurses under the watchful eye of local medical practitioners.


98. Norris, Champions of the Impossible, p. 29.
Henderson ceased to be President of the National Council of Women in 1923 but was appointed the President of the Melbourne District Nursing Society and a director on the Victorian Charities Board. For the following twenty years she worked for the extension of Victoria's charitable agencies and institutions. In the same period she began to consider new directions for women's energies. In 1922 she was a founding member of the Victorian Women's Citizen Movement set up to assist the election of women to parliament and municipal councils and to press for representation of women on all public boards, commissions and tribunals. At its inaugural meeting she spoke of the loss resulting from the confinement of women's energies to a narrow circle and personal interest, predicting, the 'passiveness of women was beginning to break up'. 'Women', she said

... wanted to undertake all sorts of tasks the State had left alone. In this way more than any other they would rescue the State from the accusation of being the organ of a ruling class. They would make it the trustee for the common good.

To further these aims Henderson willingly lent her support to the movement to professionalise the welfare area which she herself had served so long in a voluntary capacity. She served on the committee set up to establish the first almoner's training course at the Melbourne Hospital in the late 1920s and in 1931, as a fitting

100. *Argus*, 10 August 1922, p. 7.
culmination of her efforts, her youngest daughter, Lynette Henderson, became the first student almoner accepted at the hospital.  

Jessie Henderson's life encapsulates the experiences, observations and strategic responses of the women's movement in the inter-war period. Increasingly, organised women saw their substantial and generally unpaid spade-work, in a variety of areas concerned with the organisation of social life, ignored or amended without reference to their original aims. Their opinions and suggestions in social welfare work, as in other areas (including their own homes), were subsumed to those of 'experts' from the established, male-dominated professions of medicine, education, law and religion. The gaining of the vote was not enough on its own to achieve vital reforms in the interests of women or children or to enforce the form that such reforms should take. In a country 'where the working of the political machine causes us to be governed almost entirely by the masculine point of view', as one member of the National Council of Women put it, new strategies had been necessary.

101. O'Brien and Turner, 'Voluntary and Professional Welfare Roles', p. 6. The first trained social workers often had a family background of social service. Jessie Brookes, daughter of Ivy and niece to Mabel Brookes, was one of the first students to complete a diploma course in social work in conjunction with a B.A. at the University of Melbourne in 1936. Marjorie Tipping, 'Jessie Clarke: founder of Nappy Wash' in Lake and Kelly, Double Time, p. 400.

102. SMH, 28 September 1928, p. 12.
The National Council of Women and its affiliates evolved a cohesive and recognisable strategy. Their aim had been the construction of an arena of public influence for women centred around their involvement in social welfare issues. As a self-styled 'Women's Parliament', the Council succeeded in constituting itself as the separate, non-party arena for women interested in public activities. This women's political body paralleled, at the state and federal levels, the politics dominated by class. Its leaders commanded respect and loyalty from a wide spectrum of women and their support gave them some leverage in the wider male-dominated society. Something more however, was needed to bring women into the realms of public policy-making. Rather than launch an assault on the male-dominated parliaments, the Council turned instead to capture its own place of influence in the apparatus of the state by supporting the aspirations of women professionals and welfare workers to confirm and extend their authority in public life.

The choice of this strategy was to a certain extent dictated by the changing structure of leadership and influence within the women's movement in the inter-war years. Earlier in the century it had been customary in each State National Council for vice-regal ladies, usually the wives of state governors, to be offered the position of President. With the resignations of Lady Edeline Strickland in Sydney and Lady Stanley in Melbourne in 1918, this policy changed and the Councils announced a desire for leaders with more time to devote to their
duties and a greater knowledge of local needs. With increasing frequency the top executive positions within the Council were taken by women who had some education, usually at the university level, or with strong links to the university through employment or marriage. In Sydney the President in 1919, Lady Jean Anderson, was a graduate from the University of Sydney (B.A., 1890). Her successor, Mrs (later Lady) MacCallum, was the wife of the Vice-Chancellor and an active participant in university women's organisations and activities. Upon her resignation in 1928 she was replaced, for the following decade, by Mildred Muscio, who had taken her M.A. (1905) at Sydney University and after the death of her husband, the former Challis Professor of Philosophy, worked as an Extension Lecturer in Psychology. The pattern was not as obvious in Victoria, where leading female philanthropists continued to hold the President's position, but in both States executive positions were increasingly dominated by women employed as teachers at schools and universities as headmistresses, doctors, nurses and public servants. Such women directed the strategies and policies of the standing committees on health, education, industrial and welfare issues. Professional women, in law and medicine, also acted informally as lecturers.

105. The Ladies' Sphere, Sydney, 15 December 1923, p. 33.
and were appointed as 'social counsellors' to advise the executive on health and legislative matters. Their influence was enhanced by the affiliation of professional associations to the Council. Organisations such as the Headmistresses' Associations in both States, the Australasian Nurses' Association and the Victorian Medical Women's Society offered the Councils the expertise of women working in medicine and education while at the same time keeping their own professional members in touch with reform initiatives.

The National Councils of Women, their higher echelons dominated by educated women, actively championed the opening of new employment opportunities for their members. The qualifications of individual members for positions on state boards and committees were consistently placed before the Government. In addition, they lobbied tirelessly for an extension of appointments for women in established welfare areas such as community nursing, industrial and school inspection, police work and all boards and enquiries dealing with issues of public health and welfare. The movement of trained women into these and other welfare fields, however, proceeded slowly. New career areas had been developed and promoted. The professionally trained domestic scientist, it was thought, would sponsor and develop new areas of expertise for women as research chemists, as dietary and nutritional

experts and as public health administrators. The professional social worker would reclaim the authority of women as caretakers and controllers of social life. The women's movement's support for the aspirations of women professionals and lay women in welfare areas and their repeated attempts to cordon off these areas as 'women's work', or to assert the special needs of mothers, pregnant women, consumers or working 'girls' which they alone could appreciate, represented their attempt to retrieve a role which was women's before the advent of the professions. By these means they hoped to set and enforce community standards of mental and physical health and welfare and promote the development of preventive social services.

Professional careers in health and welfare also held the potential for the single woman to forge an independent lifestyle outside the traditional boundaries of marriage and family. Welfare work, whether paid or unpaid, remained consistent with social expectations for women; women in the welfare professions would 'mother' the community, providing the 'feminine' qualities of nurturance and sympathy and thus fulfil female obligations of service. The fact that professional women were so intimately involved in works of social reform, aimed at the betterment of conditions of family life, added weight to their assertion that there was no real opposition between women's interests inside the home and their outside involvement in professional careers.
Professionally qualified health and welfare workers moved into a variety of employment fields. By the mid-1930s practically all major public hospitals had accepted the need to engage almoners and dietitians. A few graduates went into psychiatric social work although this field remained undeveloped until after the war. Others entered the child welfare field as playground supervisors and as social workers attached to kindergartens and nursery schools. Religious charity bodies and other non-governmental social service agencies also offered employment as did co-ordinating bodies such as the NSW Council of Social Service. While women moved into professional welfare positions in small but steadily increasing numbers they tended to be accepted into areas where they were in subordinate positions and distanced from policy-making. Almoners in hospitals, to take one example, were seen with nurses as part of a team under the direction of doctors. This development was followed closely by the rise of professional hospital management which became largely a male career. In most fields which women social workers entered in the 1930s, the actual social work - the face-to-face handling of individuals and groups in need - was allotted to women. The major policy-making and administrative positions fell to men.

The choice of a male-constructed professional ethos as the model for the process by which the influence of women would be extended was fraught with difficulties.

107. See Lawrence, Professional Social Work, and Board of Study and Training, Annual Reports, 1930-40.
and contradictions only dimly perceived by members of the women's movement. In 1932 the Social Workers' Association of NSW was formed to promote the professional development of this field. By 1934 it was an affiliate of the National Council of Women and its membership was open not only to graduates of the Board of Social Study and Training but also to all welfare workers, whether trained or untrained\(^\text{108}\). The Victorian Association of Social workers also allowed membership, at least for a time, of unqualified welfare workers. Until well into the 1950s the voluntary worker, the 'charity manager' and the qualified social worker were linked to a range of women's organisations with the National Council of Women providing a base for the sharing of experience and the promotion of new strategies. While this co-operation proved rewarding for participants it was not without adverse effects. Lawrence notes that such contact made it easier for outside bodies to dismiss the professional social work associations 'as "just another women's organisation", especially when in four states its branches were affiliated with the National Council of Women\(^\text{109}\).

To counter such criticisms, professionally trained social workers progressively distanced themselves from their voluntary counterparts. The authority of the 'charity manager' was sustained in the 1930s by her links to

\(^{108}\) See National Council of Women, Biennial Reports, 1933-34, p. 39; 1936-38, pp. 45-46.

\(^{109}\) Lawrence, Professional Social Work, p. 178.
politicians and professionals and her mediated access to policy-making\textsuperscript{110}, but the status of the auxiliary worker or volunteer at the local level declined\textsuperscript{111}.

In all these fields, moreover, social workers operated to expand the opportunities for experts to intervene in family life, often with Government sanction. In the area of child welfare the social worker, as part of a team of medical professionals, helped shift the community focus from the physical to the mental welfare of the child. From this position it was inevitable that the social worker and guidance counsellor or psychologist could assume the right to intervene in the home analogous to the nineteenth century charitable workers' assumption of a similar right to intervene in working-class family life. The social worker joined a range of other professionals who maintained surveillance over family life intervening, sometimes in a punitive fashion, to ensure adherence to expert standards.

The development of professional roles for women by the women's movement was a strategy which was as progressive as it was reactionary. On one hand a concerted attempt was made to reclaim the authority of women in the management of social life and to allow

\textsuperscript{110} O'Brien and Turner, 'Voluntary and Professional Welfare Roles', p. 5.

trained women access to policy-making structures which affected the well-being of other women and children. On the other, the increased professional development of these roles saw trained welfare workers act to prevent what influence they did possess from passing to their untrained voluntary counterparts and to their clients. The supervisory roles forged by professional women, and the primacy they gave to family-centred values for women, served to undermine their own claims for professional autonomy. While women would continue to 'tackle the tasks that the State had left alone' in the field of community welfare they did so without significantly challenging the sexual division of labour as it manifested itself in the home, the professional training course, the agency and the wider sphere of employment.
CHAPTER TEN

THE CRISIS OF NON-PARTY FEMINISM

During the last two years ... feminism had been more or less obscured in the great and more vital issues that were affecting the whole world. Some leaders of the feminist movement had endeavoured to force the Government to give special privileges to women when it was fighting not only for its own existence, but for the peace and stability of the world. These leaders who had harassed the Government were more energetic than wise. "Feminism" ... cannot be considered apart from humanity and its interests in general.

- Millicent Preston Stanley, Presidential address to the Feminist Club1

In 1928 the Prime Minister called on various sections of the community to nominate delegates to an 'Industrial Peace' conference convened in an effort to restore industrial harmony and increase production2. In Victoria the National Council of Women approached the Trades Hall for co-operation in selecting delegates but was rebuffed3. The four women subsequently nominated by the Council included a past State President, the convenor of the Standing Committee on Trades and Professions and a representative each from the Australian Women's

1. SMH, 22 March 1933, p. 5.
National League and the Housewives' Association. As two of these women, Elizabeth Couchman and Eleanor Glencross, had direct public links with the National Party, the union movement questioned the Council's involvement as a 'non-party' women's organisation. In the following year, when Linda Littlejohn, the President of the NSW Federation of Women Voters, pronounced that the way to arrest industrial strife was to utilise 'domestic power', a similar response was forthcoming from the wives of trade unionists. Littlejohn suggested that, as the housewife bore the brunt of industrial 'chaos', strikes and lock-outs should be banned until a ballot had been taken of all women over twenty-one years of age. At the public meeting where this proposal was presented Littlejohn was forced to flee the platform followed by such comments as 'How'd your old man like to keep you on £3/14/- a week -

4. Ibid., 5 March 1928.

5. Elizabeth Couchman was the President of the Australian Women's National League. See Dame Elizabeth Couchman papers, ANL MS2752, Item 18; Rapke papers, 'Mrs Claude Couchman'. Glencross had worked for a number of years as a political organiser for non-Labor parties in NSW and Victoria before joining the Housewives' Association. In 1931 she again took up a position as an organiser for the National Party in NSW. Progressive Journal, June 1935, p. 4; SMH, 17 April 1931.


couldn't buy you much jade jewellery out of that - eh?'\textsuperscript{8}. The police were summoned to restore order and the meeting broke up amidst the singing of 'Solidarity for Ever' and the 'Red Flag'\textsuperscript{9}.

The disturbances at this meeting were reportedly engineered by the wives of striking timber workers\textsuperscript{10}. That strike was one of a series of bitter and protracted conflicts in 1928-29. The relentless slide of the economy into recession and the steady decline in value of domestic production had given rise to an employer's offensive against labour costs. In the case of the timber workers, the immediate cause of the dispute had been an award which reintroduced a 48-hour week and increased the ratio of youths to adults in the industry\textsuperscript{11}. In the coal industry the owners locked out their workers in an attempt to impose wage cuts. In this context, support from women's organisations for 'industrial peace' was tantamount to support of employer moves against workers' living standards.

For those members of the women's movement who believed in a communion of women's interests across class, condemnation of their 'industrial peace' initiatives by other women was disturbing. Both the National Council of Women and the Australian Federation of Women Voters

\textsuperscript{8} Plain Talk, Sydney, 30 March 1929, p. 29.

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{11} Robin Gollan, Revolutionaries and Reformists: Communism and the Australian Labour Movement, 1920-1955, Canberra, 1975, p. 22.
in 1930 disassociated themselves from the 'Industrial Peace' campaign. The deepening crisis provided the cover for their withdrawal as events placed different, more pressing, demands on their membership. Both the Council and Federation became preoccupied with the predicament of unemployed single women and with the welfare of the families of the unemployed. So pressing were these problems that little time remained for consideration of industrial or feminist policy. In an attempt to fill this gap new organisations were created. At the end of 1929 a new women's non-party organisation pledged to 'achieve ... a real equality of status, opportunity and liberties for men and women' was formed in Sydney through the merger of three existing women's societies\textsuperscript{12}. One of the chief instigators of the new Sydney association was Jessie Street, the wife of a prominent barrister who later became Chief Justice. Street's independent means and social position afforded her considerable latitude in public life\textsuperscript{13}. In 1920 she resigned her position as Honorary Secretary of the National Council of Women of NSW claiming it had degenerated into a mere 'recording body' and that it was undemocratic in that it placed voting rights for elected positions in the hands of a clique\textsuperscript{14}. Street then joined the Feminist Club,

\textsuperscript{12} Mitchell, United Associations of Women, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{13} See Jessie Street, Truth and Repose, Sydney, 1966; Andrée Wright, 'Jessie Street, Feminist', in Curthoys et al., Women at Work, pp. 59-68.

\textsuperscript{14} National Council of Women, NSW, Minutes, 28 October 1920; Rose Scott papers, ML MSS 38/50/3.
attracted by its progressive aims, and became its President in 1928. By 1929 however, she concluded that it too existed for other than feminist purposes. She resigned her position as President and in company with a majority of the Feminist Club's executive, merged with the Women's League\(^{15}\), the Women's Service Club\(^{16}\) and the NSW Women Voters' Association\(^{17}\) to form the United Associations\(^{18}\). Alongside this initiative a further group of women forged new alliances in an attempt to offset the twin spectres of industrial anarchy and communism. Their activities challenged anew the validity of 'non-party' feminism and widened the breach between workers, their wives and feminist activists.

'Red Tide'

Between the anti-Bolshevik campaign of the immediate post-war years and the 'Red Scare' of the

\[\text{\underline{15. By 1923 the party political Women's Reform League had declined to a handful of members who decided to reform as the non-party Women's League. It was a small but active women's social reform association under the leadership of Annie Roberts in 1929. Rischbieth papers, Series 5, Items 300, 957.}}\]

\[\text{\underline{16. The Women's Service Club had been active since the war as a social club for women interested in professional and cultural pursuits. Its President was Mrs Dougall Laing, a theosophist and Honorary Secretary of the Children's Welfare League. Women's Service Club, Memorandum and Articles of Association, Sydney, 1923.}}\]

\[\text{\underline{17. The NSW Women Voters Association was formed in 1928 to encourage the candidature of women for parliament and all public bodies although it seems to have done little in this respect until its merger with the United Associations. SMH, 7 March 1929; Rischbieth papers, Series 5, Item 957.}}\]

\[\text{\underline{18. The United Associations was later renamed the United Associations of Women.}}\]
depression, the women's non-Labor political leagues maintained a barrage of propaganda about the menace of communism. One of the key figures in this campaign was Millicent Preston Stanley. From 1918 until her election as a National Party MLA in 1925 Preston Stanley was President of the non-party Feminist Club. Her connection with the National Party was public knowledge and her protestations of non-party neutrality when performing her role as Club President drew critical comment from within and without the women's movement. After losing her seat in 1927 she again became active in Feminist Club politics and in 1929, after the departure of Jessie Street, resumed the presidency. At this time she decided that the Club should 'cease fighting in the political field, but endeavour to realise its duties as citizens in the restoration of a sane Government',\textsuperscript{19}. For Club members, realising their duties as citizens entailed setting aside their feminist programs in favour of charitable activities for the unemployed and mobilisation in opposition to the Communist Party and its Labor 'allies'.

The Communist Party had a membership of less than one thousand but such was the mood of crisis that many feared its potential. A Sane Democracy League, formed in 1920 by various commercial and industrial interests to combat communism and to 'improve relationships between employers and employees by ... continuous propaganda against the disintegrating influence of the doctrine of

\textsuperscript{19.} SMH, 22 March 1933, p. 5.
class-consciousness', was attracting new supporters. In November 1930 the Feminist Club formed itself into a women's branch of the Sane Democracy League and appointed Millicent Preston Stanley as salaried organiser. The Club allowed the Sane Democracy League to use its rooms for meetings and gave it financial help. In July 1931, before delegates from fifty branches of the women's section of the Sane Democracy League, Dr Fanny Reading, an executive member of the Feminist Club and founder of the National Council of Jewish Women, called for a crusade against communism. The resolution was passed with acclamation. Campaigning was stepped up in September 1931 when a public meeting, under the auspices of the League, the Feminist Club, the Women's Section


22. Feminist Club, Executive Minutes, K2179, 2 December 1930; 20 April 1931; 11 August 1931; 20 October 1931.

23. Fanny Reading was born in Russia and came to Australia at the age of two years. After an early musical career she trained as a doctor and undertook postgraduate work in England, Dublin and America. See Rapke papers, 'Fanny Reading'.

of the National Association, the WCTU, the Women's Country Club and the Housewives' Progressive Association, called for the Communist Party and its literature to be banned, for the expulsion of all communists from the country and for the severance of commercial and diplomatic ties with the USSR. The resolutions were passed with one dissentient. The three women ejected by the police during the course of the meeting and subsequently charged with riotous behaviour (for which two received a month's hard labour) were not counted as dissentients by the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

The Sane Democracy League had close ties with the conservative political parties and had been active on the side of anti-Lang forces since the 1920s. Just as the 'Red Scare' tactics of the League intensified from the end of 1930 with Labor's re-entry to office, they were to decline markedly after Lang's dismissal in 1932. The women's section joined the 'witch-hunt' against Beatrice Taylor, a teacher recently returned from a visit to the USSR, and soon after faded from sight.

25. In 1928 the foundation President, Portia Geach, left the Housewives' Association following the attempts of the current President, Mary Perry, to register the Association as a co-operative trading body. Geach established the Housewives' Progressive Association which gained affiliation with the Australian Federation of Housewives and appears to have been the most enduring of the Housewives' Associations in the 1930s. *SMH*, 6 May 1927; 22 June 1928; 26 June 1928.


29. See *Sane Democracy*, July 1932, p. 9; October 1932, p. 11; Mitchell, *United Associations of Women*, p. 29.
Among those sharing the platform of the Federation of Women Voters' 'Industrial Peace' meeting in 1929 was Adela Pankhurst Walsh\(^{30}\). She possessed an insider's knowledge of left-wing politics and union tactics which was rare within the women's movement and when the Federation of Women Voters withdrew from the industrial peace campaign she stepped into the breach. In September 1929 she launched the Australian Women's Guild of Empire. The new association was modelled on the British Women's Guild of Empire, formed earlier in the decade by ex-suffragette Flora Drummond\(^{31}\). Adela's mother, Emmeline Pankhurst, was one of its patrons. She reportedly said that if 'you can ... convince the ordinary woman that her home is threatened, then we shall have her support'\(^{32}\). The Australian Women's Guild of Empire followed a similar path, with emphasis on the need for women to band together in a cross-class movement to ensure domestic and national stability. The aims of

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31. Adela Pankhurst Walsh papers, ANL MS2123, Box 7, Folder 64. Letter, 14 April 1930.

the Guild were broad but ultimately interlocking. It sought to prevent strikes, to promote improved relations between employers and workers, to combat communism and class conflict, to deepen the economic and emotional ties existing between Australia and the British Empire and finally, to promote and protect woman's role as wife and mother. The Australian Guild began by mounting a trenchant campaign of criticism of the union movement for permitting strikes and 'go-slows', and of the arbitration system for setting wage levels which it claimed were a burden on industry and a cause of unemployment. The Arbitration Court could compel employers to pay the level of wages which it set but could not enforce any standard of efficiency on the worker. Accordingly, the Guild considered the only solution was education to foster recognition that a community of interest existed between capital and labour. At the core of the economic crisis lay this problem of efficiency. Only by industrial cooperation would efficiency improve and the means to raise the living standards of the worker exist. It would be the immediate object of the Guild, of which Adela Pankhurst Walsh was chief speaker and salaried campaign organiser, to educate the community for industrial efficiency.

Some years earlier Pankhurst Walsh had joined the Feminist Club and the NSW Federation of Women Voters.

In December 1929 she was a guest at the women's reception which saw the formation of the United Associations. As a member of these groups she was well placed to exercise some influence upon, and gain the ear of, Sydney's leading feminists. She took her message of industrial reconciliation to the drawing rooms of Mosman, Killara, Rose Bay and Warrawee and it was at such meetings that the branch structure of the Guild was established and most of its members recruited. The Guild's President from 1931 to 1936 was Jean Maughan, the daughter of Sir Edmund Barton, former Prime Minister. Her husband David Maughan, was a leading KC and a noted conservative. The list of office-bearers and members contained names prominent in Sydney's social and business world and at the executive level of non-party women's organisations. May Mathews, an executive member of both the NSW Federation of Women Voters and the National Council of Women, attended the preliminary meetings called by Pankhurst Walsh in 1928 as an observer for the National Council of Women. She reported that the planned association was 'non-political' in character and had as its aim 'co-partnership' between employers and employees. Mathews became a Vice President of the Guild in 1929 and the Guild later affiliated with the National Council of Women. Ruby Duncan, of the

35. Empire Gazette, November 1936.

36. National Council of Women, NSW, Executive Minutes, 1 November 1928; 6 December 1928.

37. Pioneers, November 1929, p. 7; National Council of Women, NSW, Biennial Reports, 1933-34, pp. 28-29.
United Associations, the National Council, and the Housewives' Association was another Vice-President and organiser of its factory tours from 1929 to 1931. Jean Maughan was Guild President and an executive member of the United Associations, which co-operated with the Guild in 1931 by sending speakers to an Industrial Peace meeting at the Town Hall. Several United Association branches, in particular Mosman and Ashfield, played frequent host to Guild speakers. From 1930 Grace Munro, the foundation President of the CWA, was the Guild's patroness. With the aid of the CWA and Ethel Page, the President of the Women's Country Club and the wife of the leader of the Country Party, the Guild extended its branch network into a number of country centres.

The Guild arranged public speaking classes, study circles, factory tours and the publication of the


39. United Association of Women records, ML MSS2160, Box Y4477, Executive Minutes, 5 November 1931; presscutting, Mosman Daily, n.d. [1931].


41. Australian Women's Guild of Empire, Correspondence in Chamber of Manufactures of NSW Records, Archives of University of Wollongong, D14/762-3, letter, 22 April 1929; Pioneers, 25 September 1929, p. 5.
Empire Gazette. It had strong financial support and in 1931, and annually from 1933 to 1940, received £100 from the Chamber of Manufacturers. Its activities were concentrated in a number of areas. At bases established in industrial suburbs charitable goods were distributed, meals were provided for the unemployed and their families, and social functions were organised. At sewing circles in St Peters, Redfern and Woolloomooloo, women made clothing for themselves and their children from materials donated by wealthier Guild members. In 1932 concerts were staged at the Happy Valley Unemployed Camp and in 1933 a series of afternoon tea parties was held in industrial suburbs 'where the Guild entertained the mothers with a musical programme and a speech on Empire and home matters'. This work was organised for propaganda purposes but probably won few adherents. Only four of the thirty-eight branches in 1933 were in the identifiably working-class suburbs - East Sydney, Redfern, Petersham and Surry Hills. Perhaps in recognition of this reality, the 'Industrial Tea Party' and

42. The Guild published a magazine called Pioneers in 1929. The Empire Gazette ran from 1930 to 1940.
43. Guild of Empire, Correspondence, D14/762.
44. Empire Gazette, November 1933, p. 13.
45. Guild of Empire, Correspondence, D14/762, 17 April 1936.
sewing circle remained an auxiliary function of the Guild, serving essentially to provide a basis for its assertion that it was in touch with, and representative of, workers' wives. For the most part, under Pankhurst Walsh's direction, the Guild directed its appeal to the worker on the job.

The emphasis in the Guild's propaganda shifted from the striker to the communist agitator as strike activity fell off during 1930 and the numbers in the Communist Party and front organisations like the Militant Minority Movement and the Unemployed Workers' Movement increased. By 1934 the Party claimed 3,000 members47. Adela Pankhurst Walsh waged an increasing war against this 'Red Tide'. Hers was a one-woman lecture campaign on street corners, at meetings of the unemployed, on the shop-floor and at the pit-head. As the Guild had the imprimatur of the Chamber of Manufactures, employers readily granted time during working and lunch-hours for the Guild speakers. When strike action threatened, the Guild was prepared to send speakers to the site whether in the metropolitan area or at Newcastle, Wollongong or Cessnock.48

By 1933 the Australian Women's Guild of Empire had established itself as the anti-communist women's force in NSW. Its success and high profile were due in no small part to the organisational talents and driving

47. Gollan, Revolutionaries and Reformists, p. 31.
commitment of Adela Pankhurst Walsh. The cross-class context of the Guild's message struck a chord among non-party feminists who had long held to the ideal of female solidarity. The threat posed to the social order by the disaffected unemployed raised fears for the future of democracy and, as Bessie Rischbieth said, 'women's problems' were 'bound up with democracy for under autocratic conditions, women could never become the political equals of men'⁴⁹. Their understanding of the position of women in Russia did nothing to persuade them that communism was other than an oppressive system in relation to women.

Until 1931 at least, the Guild, in tandem with the women's movement, placed special emphasis on the positive role which women could, and should, play in the community - in this case with reference to healing the breach between employer and worker. As Adela Pankhurst Walsh became less dependant on the established women's movement for support, she expressed criticism of the women's movement's plans and priorities. It was, she said, her disillusionment with the 'conservatism', limited class appeal and narrow interests of the movement which led to her formation of the Guild⁵⁰. She came increasingly to link the 'anti-family feminist' with the 'Godless Communist'. This development caused some,

⁵⁰ Adela Pankhurst Walsh papers, Box 7, Folder 64, Letters to Mr Bowman from Adela Pankhurst Walsh; Folder 66, Letter, 21 September 1929.
but significantly, not all women's movement activists to sever their ties with the Guild of Empire.

**Charity or Change?**

The men who made the war are the men who have made the financial depression - and women are the chief sufferers - the first and last victims.51

Between 1928 and 1933 the National Council of Women of NSW did not publish a report. When publication was resumed in 1934 the Report commented that, because of the economic crisis, the push for equal citizenship for women had been temporarily shelved and the energies of the Council directed towards ameliorating hardship among the destitute.52 In 1929 many of the Council's affiliates were already actively engaged in gathering clothing, food and household materials for destitute families. Some societies were making occasional cash payments for rent and other necessities. Others extended existing services. In Sydney for example, the Kindergarten Union provided free hot meals, the National Council of Jewish Women cared for Polish and German deportees and the Day Nursery Association waived charges for the children of women searching for employment.53

Outside the cities, the CWA raised funds, donated goods

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51. *Herself*, October 1930, p. 3.


and offered its 'rest-rooms' for use as relief depots. Even with this sharing of the charity load, established organisations were swamped by the volume of calls. The Ladies' Benevolent Society, which had operated in Melbourne since 1845 as the main relief agency for destitute women and children, was overwhelmed. The Footscray Ladies' Benevolent Society reported its highest ever expenses in 1930 - almost £1,500.

The National Council itself was constrained by a lack of financial resources and declined when asked by the Victorian authorities in 1930 to organise the collection and distribution of food-stuffs for suburban relief centres. Its members preferred individuals and affiliates to take the initiative. Both the NSW and Victorian governments moved fairly rapidly to systematise the distribution of relief goods, and eventually of relief work, taking as the unit for assistance the male breadwinner and his family and the single male worker. The


57. Ibid., 28 August 1930.

underlying assumption was that women found shelter within their own family or could obtain at least board and lodgings by entering domestic service. This attitude even permeated the organisations which in the previous decade had shown an understanding of women's rights and needs as workers. In Victoria, the National Council of Women was alerted by the report from the Trade Union Women's Committee on distress among unemployed women. The Committee estimated that between five and six thousand women, in Melbourne alone, were without work and many others were on short-time and reduced wages. They found that many government officers did not give relief to eligible women as they were 'under the impression that provision for unemployed women is not their function'. Women were referred from municipal body to charitable organisations to obtain aid. Single women living at home were presumed to be charges upon their families. For others, the Charity Organisation Society, whose 'inquisitorial methods' were frequently criticised, arranged rations. The National Council at first steered unemployed women towards a career in domestic service. In 1930 they were co-operating with the YWCA and its industrial officer, Jean Stevenson, to run a 'Helping Hand' Bureau to place unemployed women in domestic service. Between eighteen and twenty domestic positions a day were filled but


60. Ibid., p. 115.

there were more applicants than positions. Council members agreed to take on 'house-helpers' to ease the strain. The payment of wages was left to be negotiated between employer and employee.\(^{62}\)

The 'Helping Hand Bureau' was clearly an unsatisfactory solution to the problem of unemployment among women. Labor activist Muriel Heagney and Jessie Henderson, President of the Central Council of Benevolent Societies, organised a 'Girls' Week' fund in Melbourne which raised £5,000 in less than a month.\(^{63}\) With the proceeds they inaugurated the Unemployed Girls' Relief Movement, organised by a committee consisting of six women, representing the Central Council of Benevolent Societies and the Trades Hall. In 1926-27 Heagney was a member of the Victorian Central Executive of the Labor Party but she had developed contacts with the non-party women's movement having attended the Pan-Pacific Women's congress in Honolulu in 1928.\(^{64}\) As the organising secretary of the Unemployed Girls' Relief Movement she appealed for help from other associations, which raised money to run the twenty-one centres to which unemployed women could come and work in return for a small amount of money. Women living with their families or relatives

\(^{62}\) National Council of Women, Victoria, Minutes, 24 July 1930; 28 August 1930.

\(^{63}\) Heagney, Are Women Taking Men's Jobs?, p. 110.

could work one day a week at a sewing centre and receive 7/6. Women living in lodgings were entitled to attend twice a week and were paid 12/6. Women whose families' combined income exceeded 20/- per week were ineligible to participate.\textsuperscript{65} At the relief depots women sewed and made jam, producing four thousand items of clothing per week in 1932 and 163,120 lbs of jam in the first twenty-three months.\textsuperscript{66} Other women's associations assisted in this work.\textsuperscript{67} Women who through illness were temporarily unable to attend the Centres were visited by the Melbourne District Nursing Society. Medical problems requiring further treatment were referred to Dr Kate McKay, the Medical Woman Inspector of Factories. In cases of obvious malnutrition, allowances for milk and special dietary supplements were made available from the funds subscribed by the public. Girls 'in trouble', deserted mothers, women before the Courts and those charged with prostitution were helped.\textsuperscript{68}

With a change in government in 1932 the Unemployed Girls' Relief Movement was reorganised. Heagney was replaced by a member of the Central Council of Benevolent Societies and three week training courses were instituted to fit unemployed women for domestic work. The Minister for Sustenance, Wilfred Kent Hughes, held firmly to the belief that 'whilst domestic work was available at any wage under any conditions anywhere

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{65} Heagney, \textit{Are Women Taking Men's Jobs?}, pp. 112, 117.
  \item \textsuperscript{66} Ibid., p. 120.
  \item \textsuperscript{67} \textit{Argus}, 29 January 1931, p. 10; 7 February 1931, p. 6.
  \item \textsuperscript{68} Heagney, \textit{Are Women Taking Men's Jobs?}
\end{itemize}
in Victoria, the Government was not obliged to provide assistance to unemployed women.\textsuperscript{69} Muriel Heagney protested that women were being compelled 'to accept domestic work at wages as low as 10/- without troubling to ascertain the conditions of employment',\textsuperscript{70} The women's organisations of Victoria, in her estimation, had 'betrayed the girls by their apathy and indifference to the changes in government administration of relief',\textsuperscript{71} The type of 'domestic conscription' which she opposed, however, had already become the favoured method of dealing with the problem of women's unemployment in other states.

In NSW as in Victoria, the problem of single unemployed woman was left, to a large extent, to groups of private citizens and in particular, women's associations. As early as 1930 both Labor and non-party women's organisations began to lobby the state for the introduction of relief work for women\textsuperscript{72}. A deputation from the Women Workers' Union, the Women's Central Organising Committee of the Labor Party and representatives of various industrial unions, petitioned the Minister for Labour and Industry with several schemes. Their suggestions included renting or purchasing factories to employ

\textsuperscript{69} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 113-21.
\textsuperscript{70} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 67.
\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 112.
\textsuperscript{72} \textit{SMH}, 16 May 1930, p. 12.
tailoresses and kindred female workers, the release of money to employ home-helps where a mother was incapacitated and the establishment of emergency kitchens, staffed by out-of-work cooks and laundresses. In addition, they called for the opening of hostels for homeless women, improvements in the dole and legislation to prevent landlords seizing time-payment furniture and goods in lieu of rent.\footnote{73}

Partly in response to this growing pressure, and in light of the obvious distress prevailing, a Women's Advisory Committee was initiated by the State Unemployment Relief Council. The committee was chaired by H.M. Hawkins, a 'prominent city business man who ... had considerable experience in philanthropic work'. The CWA, the National Council of Women, women's Labor organisations and the Hospital Committee were represented as was the State Labour Exchange.\footnote{74} Grants from the Unemployed Relief Council allowed the National Council of Women to open a number of sewing centres where charity garments and 'baby kits' were produced. Women so employed got two half days work per week for which they received 10/-\footnote{75}. Funds from the same source also enabled the Council to establish a hostel in the city with accommodation for about thirty single women relief workers.\footnote{76} The women residents, who included out-of-work

\footnote{73. Ibid., 12 August 1930, p. 10.}
\footnote{74. Ibid., 15 August 1930, p. 1.}
\footnote{75. Bland, 'Unemployment Relief', p. 188.}
\footnote{76. SMH, 6 November 1930, p. 16.}
typists, nurses and school teachers, were generally assigned, with the help of the hostel administrators, to domestic service positions. While the Committee helped many women, it too presumed relief work for women would be in areas related to domestic work. Through the women's organisational network it launched appeals to householders to take women as servants, the office of the National Council of Women handling the inquiries. The women were to be paid 10/- a week by the employer with a subsidy of 5/- a week from the unemployment relief funds. The Minister stated the 15/- a week should be considered as a training program. Having gained the requisite experience the woman could command higher wages.

The government adopted the scheme and it was presented at a public meeting in Sydney Town Hall by Ruby Board, a Vice President of the National Council of Women. There it 'met with scant ceremony from the noisy element, who showed no disposition to wait for training. The two Labor women committee members had earlier demonstrated their opposition to the scheme by resigning. The scheme proceeded nevertheless, with training courses in practical cookery and housework arranged for about 250 girls. While the National

77. National Council of Women, NSW, Biennial Reports, 1933-34, p. 17.
78. SMH, 15 August 1930, p. 11; 11 September 1930, p. 10.
80. Herself, October 1930, p. 3.
81. SMH, 4 September 1930, p. 10.
Council of Women gained a victory on relief work being available to women, its acceptance of domestic service as the solution to women's employment problems evoked criticism from a number of quarters. Nurse Francis and Kate Dwyer resigned from the Committee because they stood for 'State and Federal awards being paid to all persons engaged in relief works';82. The Central Women's Department of the Communist Party denounced in Working Woman, its monthly magazine published since 1930, the relief schemes of the 'boss class women's organisations';83. Its protests on behalf of 'the unemployed factory girl living on rations, sharing a stuffy little room with two other bread-liners' were relatively short-lived.84 By 1933, the Women's Departments within the Communist Party were being dissolved.85

The newly formed United Associations was also critical of these schemes. Its first broadsides were fired at philanthropic organisations. The Sydney City Mission and the Smith Family utilised women's talents in their fund-raising but refused them representation on their boards.86 Linda Littlejohn,

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82. Ibid., 18 August 1930, p. 10.
83. The Working Woman, 1930-34; see also Communist Party of Australia, Women in Australia: from factory, farm and kitchen, 1932, p. 11.
86. United Associations, Y4477, Executive Minutes, 26 June 1930; 12 April 1934.
a foundation Vice-President of the United Associations, called for women's contributions to be placed on a proper basis: 'Let us be done with auxiliaries - why should we do all the dirty work and not have a voice in the spending of the money we raise?'; 87. She also added a warning against deviating from the original political aims to 'charitable work'; 88. Its own relief plan was for farmers to employ young women as apprentices at 6/- a week funded by the government. Women labourers could clear Crown Land and run Angora rabbit farms. The Hospital Committee fund could be used to employ more nurses in country hospitals and baby clinics and as bush nurses 89.

Schemes designed to absorb 'Surplus Women' by engaging them in small-scale primary production had been a theme in the activities of organised women from the nineteenth century. A Women's Horticultural Society had been formed during the war to train women in horticulture, bee-keeping, poultry farming and sericulture 90. The United Associations appointed a committee chaired by Lorna Byrne, a women's organiser employed by the Department of Agriculture, to investigate prospects for women in rural areas. The report suggested the scientific staff of the Department of Agriculture should employ women and that the domestic science course at the University should

87. United Associations, Box Y4482, presscuttings, Sun, 7 November 1931.
88. Rischbieth papers, 4/123.
89. SMH, 11 August 1930, p. 10.
be directed more towards research and teaching suitable for rural needs. Doris State,nee Williams, the only graduate of the B.Sc.Dom., was a member of the committee.

In 1931 the United Associations decided to support a proposal that unemployed single women be offered the opportunity to become farmers. A similar scheme, involving families as well as single women, had already been suggested to the National Council of Women by Dr Richard Arthur and the Rev. R.B.S. Hammond. The Council rejected the scheme as too costly and impractical. When the government declined to make land available for women settlers, the Association's Women's Land Settlement Committee, chaired by Jessie Street, staged public demonstrations in protest. About fifty acres were grudgingly made available at Doonside on the metropolitan fringe of Sydney and two hundred women answered the advertisement announcing the scheme, of whom sixteen were chosen. The Settlement rapidly proved too great a drain on the resources of the Association and though another site was leased at Glenfield, and a farm training scheme was established there in 1932, the scheme collapsed soon afterwards. Unfavourable publicity

91. SMH, 9 September 1930, p. 3.
92. Ibid., University of Sydney, Calendar ... 1930, p. 17.
93. SMH, 26 June 1931, p. 4; Feminist Club, K21797, Executive Minutes, 21 July 1931.
94. Mitchell, United Associations of Women, p. 13; United Associations, Box Y4482, presscuttings, SMH, 12 October 1931.
following the accidental drowning of a woman resident hastened the closure. Street took over all of Glenfield's assets and liabilities in 1933. At the end of 1934 she too had to recognise defeat. The farm equipment was sold and the funds were donated back to the United Associations.

The problems of unemployment were overwhelming and women's organisations largely abandoned the fight for equal citizenship. The 'hand of sisterly love' took its place. The National Council of Women characterised its duty in the economic crisis as one of ensuring that,

... as far as we are able ... national suffering does not fall only on the weak and that loss of income and resources is not borne by those who have least while the majority suffer little or nothing.

In this schema, women, being the least powerful politically and economically, were the 'weak', the victims and thus most deserving of their humanitarian efforts. For this reason, as much as for any consideration based on women's rights, attention was focussed on the injustices meted out to unemployed single women. The activities of the Unemployed Girls' Relief Movement in Victoria, the National Council of Women in NSW and the United Associations were successful in challenging sustenance policies which denied women entitlement to relief. This success was

limited, however, by the fact that the schemes they formulated were short-term solutions designed to meet the needs of a crisis situation. In the long-term they may have served to reinforce attitudes about the nature and scope of women's work.

The prevailing set of social attitudes and circumstances posed a dilemma for women's organisations. The government was more than willing to allocate responsibility for the care of destitute women to the established female charity networks. State and local authorities made use of their organisational networks, voluntary labour and charity expertise to diminish public responsibility in this area. Official support and funding however, remained contingent upon programs upholding the established social order, instanced by the barriers put in the path of the 'Women on the Land' scheme. To provide work for women within these constraints, women's organisations had little choice but to fall back on the basic domestic skills which most women had acquired. As could be seen from the failure of the 'Women on the Land' scheme, there seemed little point in training women for jobs where they would never be fully accepted.

**All for Australia**

During the depression the validity of the non-party stance, cross-class projection and feminist principles of many women's organisations was challenged and the endurance of the women's movement threatened.
The time and resources needed to care for the victims of the depression left them little time in which to develop any substantial critical evaluation of a society which allowed such suffering to occur, or which placed women, both at home and in the labour market in such a tenuous position. Some women's organisations staged a holding operation, attempting to reaffirm the civil rights of women while avoiding identification with the numerous political leagues pushed into prominence by the depression. The United Associations for example, rejected the advances of the Sane Democracy League on the grounds that the League's formation of a women's auxiliary or section of the League was undemocratic. Other groups found no difficulty in setting feminism aside, at least for the duration of the economic crisis, to rally around the standards of industrial peace and anti-communism. Their abandonment of core feminist policies, like the non-party objectivity of feminism, seem to demonstrate in an extreme form the hollowness of their original commitment. Yet, in a situation of apparent national crisis, women from a wide range of unaligned organisations were similarly drawn to support class-based party political activity. Non-party women's organisations which had previously not articulated, at least publicly, any particular party bias, moved into the ranks of anti-Labor movements. Industrial and political stability was seen as

97. United Associations, Y4477, Executive Minutes, n.d. [1930].
overwhelmingly important.

The Victorian Baptist Women's Association in 1931 met to discuss 'Women's part in the present national crisis'. The meeting was opened by Cecilia Downing, a leading member of the Baptist Women's Association, the Housewives' Association and the Australian Women's National League and the wife of a branch manager of the State Savings Bank. At a time when Lang was advising a moratorium on interest payments to British bond-holders and E.G. Theodore, the Commonwealth Treasurer, was moving cautiously towards a measure of inflation, Downing proposed that recovery hinged on the application of efficiency, economy, hard work and the restoration of public confidence. The meeting responded by resolving that the Victorian Baptist Women's Association membership, 'through its votes', would advocate 'paying all creditors to the uttermost farthing'. At the same time, the National Council of Women of Victoria, of which Downing was the Honorary Secretary, was being drawn into a new association in the 'national interest', the All for Australia League. After a lecture from Kingsley Henderson, a promotor of the League, the executive of the Council decided to support its objects on the condition that it remained a 'non-party' body. The decision taken seemed preordained. Alice Moss, the

98. Progressive Journal, 4 September 1935, p. 5; Housewife, Melbourne, June 1939, p. 3.
99. Argus, 26 February 1931, p. 3.
100. National Council of Women, Victoria, Minutes, 26 February 1931.
President of the Council, had been a member of the provisional committee of the All for Australia League\textsuperscript{101}. At a subsequent meeting of the Council Moss characterised the new association as a 'moral force' and proclaimed to the assembled delegates that the 'women of Australia stood for honesty of purpose and a desire to pay their just debts\textsuperscript{102}. Part of the appeal of the All for Australia League to the National Council was that both groups were ostensibly 'non-party' Dr Gertrude Sweet when addressing the meeting emphasised that the League, like the Council, stood for all 'shades of political thought, all parties, ranks, and classes in the community'. In line with this cross-class approach Ivy Brookes explained that

> What was needed today was a combined party of honest politicians prepared to work for Australia and not party, with an advisory board of businessmen, economic experts and a few experienced women to undertake scientific investigations.\textsuperscript{103}

The Council had argued on many occasions that women constituted one group of experts. As experts women were as necessary for the good organisation of the state as any other group.

The doctrines underlying the growth of large 'non-party' citizens' associations in this period were


\textsuperscript{102} Argus, 7 March 1931, p. 9; National Council of Women, Victoria, Minutes, 31 March 1931.

\textsuperscript{103} P. Loveday, 'Anti-Political Political Thought', The Great Depression, Labour History, no. 17, 1970, p.127.
based on a particular understanding of the role of parties in a parliamentary democracy. The 'non-party' or, more accurately 'anti-party' flavour of their campaigns revealed fears that the established parties had undermined the ideal of popular representative government.

Ruby Duncan, who stood as an independent 'Women's Candidate' with the support of the United Associations in 1932, summarised these objections and fears:

Party politics is a curse to the country ... Instead of uniting for common legislation it divides the people and brings about a severe class distinction, while engendering a spirit of bitterness into politics, which should be broad enough, and for the good of the people to satisfy the whole.

The major thrust of this hostility was directed at the Labor Party, not only on the grounds of its caucus control, extra-parliamentary 'machinery' and faction fighting but because of its self-espoused class basis. By advancing the interests of a single class, Labor was held to have lost sight of national interests while at the same time it whipped up conflicts which facilitated the creation of a concept of class struggle. Lyons and the United Australia Movement on the other hand, claimed to transcend the pitfalls of sectionalism by putting national welfare first and that was an appeal the National Councils of Women found hard to resist. After the brief flirtation with the All for Australia League in

104. United Associations, Box Y4482, presscuttings, Sunday Guardian, 6 September 1931.
Victoria, both the Victorian and NSW Council fell in behind the call for a United Australia\textsuperscript{105}.

The choices available for women activists seeking political influence were limited, as demonstrated by the fate of the Women's Campaign Council's candidates. The Women's Campaign Council of the United Associations in 1931 offered to support any woman candidate for parliament, regardless of party affiliation, provided she incorporated in her platform equal pay for equal work, equal opportunities and status for women and equal guardianship of children. The offer was not extended to Communists\textsuperscript{106}. In 1932 five women received the Campaign Council's endorsement. Dr Lucy Gullett, the Honorary Physician to Renwick Hospital for Infants and the State Baby Health Centres, Ruby Duncan, well-known for her work with the Housewives' Association and Grace Scobie, a factory inspector and former President of the Professional Women Workers' Association, stood as Independents. Gertrude Melville and May Mathews stood as Labor candidates but Mathews had served for many years on committees of the National Council of Women. All five were unsuccessful and three of them lost their deposit\textsuperscript{107}.

\textsuperscript{105} Hewitt, 'All for Australia League', p. 13.

\textsuperscript{106} United Associations, Box Y4482, presscuttings, SMH, 7 August 1931.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., SMH, 4 June 1932.
The women who stood as Independents had experience of party political organisations\(^{108}\). They had come full circle, withdrawing first to non-party, non-political organisations among women and then back to politics as women's candidates. Their defeat symbolised the confusion into which the movement had been cast in this time of national crisis.

108. Grace Scobie had left the Labor Party during the war over the conscription issue and became a council member of the National Association in the early 1920s. Labor News, 2 October 1920, p. 1; Lone Hand, March 1920, p. 25. Ruby Duncan was a member of the Women's Country Club which provided unofficial support for the Country Party of NSW and of the anti-Labor Sane Democracy League until 1931. The Housewife, May 1934, p. 9.
CHAPTER ELEVEN

AN UNCERTAIN EQUALITY: THE UNITED ASSOCIATIONS AND EQUAL RIGHTS

We may nowadays often hear it asked whether separate women's movements are still needed in our communities. The answer must still be "yes" ... although women have now equal social and legal status with men in theory, they are not yet equal in fact. The values set up by custom and economic necessity are not the same for women as for men, and women have yet to struggle against the inferior values assigned to them.

- Mildred Muscio,
  Presidential Address to the 1
  NSW National Council of Women

The economic and social distress occasioned by the depression had a significant effect on the solidarity and direction of women's organisational networks. The tensions generated threatened the package of social reforms and citizenship rights previously espoused by a relatively united front of women's societies. The inability or reluctance of the National Councils of Women to close ranks in support of hard-won freedoms, their vacillations over controversial issues and their self-imposed restriction to more traditional areas of the women's programme, left the initiative in non-party feminism to the United Associations. A new network

of organisations co-operated with the United Associations: the Women's League, the NSW Women Voters' Association, the Feminist Club and the Victorian Women Citizens' Movement. The Associations' network made a vigorous response to the anti-feminist ideas increasingly articulated in this period. As affiliates of the Perth-based Australian Federation of Women Voters, they were able to distance themselves and their programmes from the political style and tactics of the National Councils. Items on their agenda for change resembled areas of concern already isolated and pursued by the Council and its affiliates but a certain shift in focus, from the private realm to the public, can be discerned in their programme. Mounting a defence of woman's 'rights', they emphasised equal rights in the home and the workplace. They lobbied for equal marriage, divorce and guardianship laws, equal wages for women in the workforce, access to employment and opportunities for advancement. Bridging the two spheres was their interest in seeking acknowledgement of the value of woman's unpaid contribution to the community through her childbearing and rearing and domestic labour, much along the lines pursued earlier by the National Councils of Women and their affiliates.

That the Australian Federation and its affiliates sought to constitute a separate and dynamic wing of the women's movement was apparent in their singleminded approach, concentrated on equality. Whereas the National Councils had placed a certain amount of faith in the efficacy of constructing
and enhancing specific areas of 'women's work' as a means towards their emancipation, the Federation strove to integrate women's talents and activities into a male-dominated area - borrowing from this arena definitions of status, skill and social worth. Apparent differences between the organisational skills and style of the two bodies, however, masked what was basically a similar acceptance of the role that women should play in the community. Their shared class position, and proximity to the ideological tradition which had informed middle-class feminist and social reform efforts since the turn of the century, raises significant questions about the relative success of the shift from 'private sphere' to 'equal rights' feminism and the relevance of the latter strain of feminism for ordinary women in Australia in the post-depression years.

Organising for Equality

By the 1930s the National Councils of Women had become too cumbersome to be agents for rapid social action and change. The Councils maintained that their role lay in the 'forming and focussing of public opinion in matters concerning women and children'. They did not aim at 'definite corporate action'. As a speaker at the inter-

2. Lone Hand, October 25 1919, p.17.
state conference in Perth in 1929 explained, the two main functions of the Council were 'to collect and circulate information bearing on social problems, so that women's opinions may be based on facts' and 'to focus and give clear expression to those same opinions'. The Australian Federation of Women Voters was formed to promote equality of opportunity, responsibility and reward between men and women and to encourage a high moral standard for both sexes. In contrast to the National Councils it maintained a purposefully selective attitude to affiliated bodies, limiting membership to those which espoused and actively worked for its political objectives. It accepted Non-Party Women's Leagues in Tasmania, South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia, and in Victoria the Women Citizens' Movement. The situation in Sydney was somewhat complicated by the fact that the United Associations and its separate constituents - the Women's League, the NSW Women Voters' Association and the Women's Service Club - all had separate representation on the Federation, as did the Feminist Club, the Women's Union of Service and, until 1930, the WCTU. All accepted intervention in the political process as necessary

3. SMH, 28 September 1925, p.12.

4. The Australian Federation of Women's Societies for Equal Citizenship changed its name to the Australian Federation of Women Voters in 1927. SMH, 21 May 1927, p.12.
for securing the reforms upon which true equality rested. Repeated disagreements marked the relationship between the Federation and the National Councils. The latter saw themselves as the 'Women's Parliaments' and reacted to the Federation as an attempt to usurp their position in the women's movement at the national level. There were other grounds for conflict. The Federation, like the National Councils, drew on a liberal tradition of feminist thought which advocated gradual reforms within the existing system and placed faith in the efficacy of education and legislation to affect the emancipation of women. Where their philosophies diverged and major differences in focus and strategy emerged was in the two networks' conception of the difference in men's and women's natures and thus the conditions of woman's contribution to and involvement in public life.

The members of the Federation drew on a rationalist and individualist philosophy in the purest form of their argument, the biological basis of male and female nature was set aside. They stressed the shared humanity of men and women and the right of both sexes to participate in and contribute to social life in whatever way each individually saw fit. Unlike the Council, the Federation members saw themselves as citizens first and as housewives and mothers second, and then by their own volition. Inequalities between the sexes were explained in terms of the exclusion of women from certain areas of opportunity and reward. By stressing the shared humanity of men and women rather than any biologically-based differences, the Federation sought
to achieve the integration of women into the male-dominated public world. At the time of the formation of the United Associations there had been heated debate on the inclusion or removal of 'Women' from the Association's name. Those who opposed the inclusion of 'Women' argued that the organisation would be working for the benefit of the whole community, not just for women; by calling themselves the United Associations they could avoid the divisive 'man-woman element'. 5 Not until 1938, after almost a decade battling discrimination, did the organisation become the United Associations of Women. 6

While the National Council of Women sought woman-defined goals and processes and the transformation of the male-dominated political arena, the member bodies of the federation opted for political and economic goals which placed 'women's issues' firmly within the mainstream of male-defined political culture. In 'Should Our Charitable Bodies be Involved in Political Controversy?' Bessie Rischbieth, the Federal President of the Australian Federation, argued that the majority of the Councils' affiliates were uninterested in political matters. 7 The National Councils did not differentiate, as did the Federation, between the

5. United Associations, Y4482, Newscuttings, Book 1, 28 February 1930.
6. Ibid., Y4477, Council Minutes, 3 March 1938.
welfare and cultural activities of women and parliamentary-based politics. The goals they sought drew on an autonomously created system of values derived from the particular experiences common to them. They wished to reform society and politics in line with these values, stressing in the process women's special qualities and co-operative effort.

While drawing out these differences of emphasis between Council and Federation the intention has not been to assert that either body was theoretically or strategically uniform in its approach to women's emancipation. Within both networks contradictory stances and opposing ideologies can be found. The differences between the two were blurred by the cross-organisational affiliations between the two networks. In Victoria, the Women Citizens' Movement was affiliated with both the National Council of Women and the Federation. In Sydney, executive members of the United Associations held executive positions in a range of associations affiliated to the Council.

At first glance, there seems to be little difference between the social composition of the Councils' executives and that of the Federation and its affiliates. Both organisations were dominated by women who were in professional or semi-professional employment or were the wives of employers or professional men. Both networks held meetings during the day, indicating some employed members held positions which allowed flexibility of hours. Both came under increasing pressure to schedule important gatherings after normal
working hours. Financially, both supplemented subscriptions with private donations. In 1929 the Federation received only 22 pounds in fees from its affiliates - an amount which fell far short of the sum required to finance its domestic and international political forays. the 'liberality of the President [Bessie Rischbieth] alone made it possible to carry on the work'. Rischbieth, the widow of a wealthy West Australian merchant, paid all her own expenses overseas and met local bills. Fees for the United Associations in 1933, when it had an estimated membership of two hundred, were 21/- for membership and 10/6 for subscription to printed material. The financial gap was bridged by donations from wealthier members and funds raised by fetes, bridge parties, picnics and classes in debating and political education.

The style of fund-raising was indicative of the class composition of both the Federation and the Council. There were, however, some differences in the status of members. One former member of the United Associations recalled that


11. United Associations, Y789, Homemakers, n.d. [1933].
the Council leaders were 'society women' - the type that
'drilled diamonds' and left visiting cards. By comparison
she claimed Association members were more often women workers;
not 'jam factory girls' but teachers, nurses and doctors. 12
Possibly she exaggerates the differences in the membership.
At the executive level at least, some United Associations
women, like Jessie Street and Linda Littlejohn, came from
high society. On the Council executive there were women
prominent in the education, health and welfare professions.
There was a decided generational difference. In 1930 the
average age of the executive of the United Associations
was between forty and fifty, whereas the average for the
Council was nearer sixty. The latter were more likely to
have themselves worked as young adults within a decidedly
female environment. By the 1920s this 'women's world' began
to appear old-fashioned and irrelevant to a new generation
of women reformers. For the older woman, coming from this
self-contained social and political world, the younger women's
aspirations for complete integration into the male-dominated
mainstream seemed equally doubtful. 13

12. Interview with Mrs. M. Moore, Turramurra, 17 December
1980.

13. Estelle Freedman in her article 'Separatism as Strategy:
Female Institution Building and American Feminism,
a similar overlapping of feminist styles in America.
She argues, however, that a separate 'woman's world'
had disappeared in that country by the passage of the
suffrage in 1920.
In the 1930s the National Councils continued to play a significant role in the Australian community. In 1931 they established a formal federal body - the National Council of Women of Australia - to allow the direct nomination of members to overseas delegations and Commonwealth Commissions and enquiries. Long years of co-operation with a range of different governments had ensured that, in matters concerning the health and welfare of women and children, their submissions were considered and on occasion incorporated into official policy. A number of individuals within the Council were also rewarded with appointments to various government boards, committees and commissions dealing with 'women's issues'. Between 1935 and 1938 Mildred Muscio, the NSW National Council of Women President, was appointed to the Department of Education Advisory Council, as 'alternate delegate' to the League of Nations, as Chairwoman of the Women's Advisory Council established by the Premier to aid the Sesquicentenary Celebrations, as a member of the King George V Jubilee Fund for Maternal and Infant Welfare and to the Council of Social Services.  

14. After the Victorian National Council of Women was refused representation at a Federal Health Council meeting a place was reserved for the President, Ivy Moss, on the newly formed National Medical and Health Research Council in 1937.  

15. Norris, Champions of the Impossible, p.79.
Councils consolidated their influence, the Federation and its affiliates were altering the agenda for women's emancipation. Although individual members and groups within the Council joined in the campaign in defense of women's 'rights', the Council itself was limited in the actions it could initiate and in the issues it could support with the full backing of its affiliates. Increasingly it confined itself to safe, single-issue campaigns. The Australian Federation transformed specific demands for social and moral concerns into predominantly political issues, drawing women's issues further into the political and economic mainstream.

Feminism Under Seige

Is it not time we wakened up to the fact that a sex-war is as stupid and more wicked than the Class War? 16

By the early 1930s, certain sections of the women's movement were alarmed to discover that the temporary truce called in the battle for women's rights had allowed an anti-feminist backlash. Mildred Muscio, the President of the National Council of Women of NSW was moved to comment that nations were often like children who, 'frightened by the new conditions and experiences which are part of their growth, run from what is new back to the old familiar things'. 17 Even the equanimity of the Council was disturbed by the dawning

16. The Empire Gazette, 30 August 1932, p.15.
17. National Council of Women, NSW, Biennial Reports, 1933-34, p.4.
realisation that the attack on the political and economic freedoms won by women emanated not only from outside authorities but from within the women's movement itself. In the face of intensifying industrial and social unrest, as well as the growing threat of communist infiltration, many organisation women who had acquiesced in or supported programmes of women's rights and welfare reform in the 1920s, withdrew support or lapsed into inactivity.

The unfavourable social and governmental attitudes shown towards working women during the depression has already been examined in relation to the allocation of sustenance and relief work. As the depression deepened attacks on the working woman became even more intense. Increasingly, women were singled out as an important, if not the important, cause of the high unemployment. In particular, hostility was focused on the married woman worker, clearly reflecting 'family' ideology which denied women a legitimate role as wage-earners.

In 1930, a Melbourne conference of the Australasian Women's Association, a friendly society for women which was allied to the Australian Natives Association, expressed disapproval of married women in comfortable circumstances taking employment in competition with single women who were compelled to earn a living for themselves. In the same year the Feminist

Club, which had been formed in 1914 to work for 'equality of status, opportunity and payment between men and women in all spheres', expressed a similar viewpoint. In its submission to the Unemployment Relief Council, the Club proposed surveying employers to discover how many married women in employment had husbands who were also employed, with a view to replacing the women. It also suggested unmarried women employees whose parents were in a good financial position could be placed on half-time. The Club volunteered to form and staff a bureau to investigate and classify women workers.\textsuperscript{19}

The attack on married women workers intensified as unemployment increased. The Minister for Education, addressing the Annual Conference of the NSW Teachers' Federation in 1930, mooted the possibility that married women teachers whose husbands were in employment would be dismissed from the service.\textsuperscript{20} The women's movement was divided in response. The Feminist Club regretted 'there seemed to be no other way under the present conditions than the schemes proposed by the Government'.\textsuperscript{21} It informed the Married Women Teachers' Committee that, as the Club was affiliated to the National

\textsuperscript{19} SMH, 11 August, 1930, p.10.

\textsuperscript{20} Judy Mackinolty, 'To Stay Or To Go: Sacking Married Women Teachers' in Mackinolty and Radi (eds.), In Pursuit of Justice, pp.140-41.

\textsuperscript{21} Feminist Club Records, K21797, Executive Minutes, 3 February 1931.
Council of Women, which was taking up the question, the Club itself would take no action. The National Council, in its turn, found that the lack of unanimity among its affiliates on the issue, precluded any united effort in opposition. The Council did forward resolutions to the Department of Education protesting against the dismissals and a copy of this protest was sent to A.B. Piddington when it was learned that he was to speak against the dismissals at the Bar of the House. Mildred Muscio publicly declared her opposition to the sackings but, she added, the Council could not act as the delegates were not in agreement. The resolution to oppose the dismissals as a matter of principle was only carried by a slight majority.

The United Associations, alone of the women's organisations, acted decisively to oppose the sackings. In 1931 it launched what was to be a sixteen year campaign aimed at reversing the decision. Dismissal of women because they had married, they maintained, was a denial of personal freedom, an attack on women's economic independence and injurious to the institution of marriage. In addition to pointing out the illogicality of discriminating against one group within the public service and not others, and the impact that such a measure could be expected to have on the quality and

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23. Anzac Fellowship of Women Records, ANL MS2864, Box 3, Folder 5, 10 October 1932.
efficiency of the teaching service, their basic and most frequently repeated objection was that the dismissal of these women was an attack on all working women:

The case for the women teachers is the case for all womankind. Legislation like the Married Women Teachers Act is the first step towards putting back the clock of emancipation and self-respect for every married woman who wants to enjoy economic independence, and that widening of mind and vision that comes with following a career outside the home.24

They pointed out that unemployment would not be cured by throwing women out of work. In this context they argued in favour of equal pay proposals, regarding this as a right owed women and pointed out the need to rationalise wages which no longer reflected either the family responsibility or work contribution from men and women. They argued that a more effective economy, compared to the dismissals of married women teachers and reductions in pensions or endowment benefits, would be achieved by ceasing to pay the single man a wage which was calculated to keep a family. The introduction of uniform wages for men and women, with an effective measure of family endowment to recognise the responsibilities of family men, would be just and economical.25


Their campaign for equal rights in the workplace attracted so many teachers, the United Associations formed a teachers' section. It held regular meetings which arranged publicity, petitions, lobbying and deputations to members of parliament. Less than one hundred and forty teachers were dismissed, though the rest had to accept temporary status with the resultant adverse effects on promotion and wages. The Temporary Teachers' Association, which affiliated with the United Associations, maintained the repeal campaign for sixteen years. During the war, teacher shortages would force the Government to urge married women to return to the service, although still only as temporaries. The Act was repealed in 1948.  

While other women's organisations prevaricated on the issue of dismissing married women, evading the wider implications of the Act as it related to the economic independence of women, the Australian Women's Guild of Empire came out strongly in opposition to the United Associations. In Adela Pankhurst Walsh's view, separate feminist organisations existed solely to 'further women's interests' and she did not hesitate to place the 'broad viewpoint of National Welfare' ahead of our sectional interests. In its recommendations to the Unemployed Relief Council the Guild cautioned the Government against any initiatives, such as

27. Pioneers, 5 September 1929, p.1
the opening of laundries, work-rooms or sewing depots, which might interfere with private industry. The solution to the unemployment crisis, it held, rested in the hands of women; single women workers and women at home who were not in actual need should refrain from looking for outside employment and married women with husbands in work should take a 'holiday' from outside employment until conditions improved. 28 They criticised the United Association land settlement scheme claiming that with so many homes without domestic help it seemed 'topsy-turvy' to spend money establishing women where men ought to be. 29

Central to the Guild's philosophy was a commitment to marriage and the family and the domestic role and responsibilities allocated to women within this sphere. By the 1930s Adela Pankhurst Walsh had several children of her own as well as responsibility for the care of three step-children from her husband's first marriage. Despite the contradictions raised by her own political activism she maintained that women 'have still their greatest and most noble part to play in the HOME'. 30 The trend towards paid employment for women, she feared, weakened marital and family ties

29. Ibid., 28 September 1931, p.2.
by making women independent of their fathers and husbands. 31
Child endowment was believed to accelerate this disintegrating
process. 32 Tying their opposition in neatly with the prevalent
concern over the rapid spread of Communism, the Guild claimed,

It is well known that Communists look upon
this as the first step in the breaking up
of the family through the destruction of
the economic ties between the father and
his children ... If it is done, then one
of the strongest forces for economic
progress will be removed, and the cement
which binds society together broken away. 33

A significant number of women, from both party and non-
party women's organisations, continued to lend support to
the Guild in the 1930s. Jean Maughan, its President, resigned
from the United Associations in 1932. The United Associations
decided not to retain the Guild's Empire Gazette on its
files because of its 'reactionary' nature. 34 At the same
time, while the original concern of feminists over the threat
of industrial unrest and political instability was diminishing,
effectively removing one motivation for continuing partici-
pation, a number of key individuals from the women's movement
continued to work with and support the Guild. Emily Bennett,
Honorary Secretary of the Women's League, a Vice-President
of the United Associations and its representative on the

31. SMH, 11 April 1931, p.15; Empire Gazette, 30 August 1932, p.15.
33. SMH, 25 January 1930, p.23.
34. United Associations, Y4477, Executive Minutes, 21 January 1932; 25 August 1932.
Australian Federation of Women Voters, worked as an industrial organisier for the Guild from 1933 to 1936. Bennett's position was not anomalous. A number of women prominent in the non-party women's networks headed by the Australian Federation and the National Council of Women continued to support the Guild of Empire.

There is a case for arguing that Adela Pankhurst Walsh changed her perspective on woman's role very little in her transition from suffragette to anti-communist propagandist. In her earlier writings for the Labor movement she consistently espoused a commitment to the need to strengthen and protect woman's domestic role. In 1925 she roundly condemned the introduction of women into industry, chiefly on the grounds that it was impossible for the mother to compete with men on the labor market, and at the same time give the proper care to her home and children. In a follow-up series of articles for the Labor Daily she attacked capitalism for the loss by women of their honoured place in society:

So far from the motherhood of women being her glory, capitalist society is impatient of it. Children must be born to carry on war and industry, but not too many of them, and the process must interrupt the industrial life of women as little as possible.

35. Mitchell, United Associations of Women, p.9, pp.40-41; Stead's Review, March 1929, p.31; Empire Gazette, January 1933, p.8. Bennett was also a former organiser for the Women's Reform League. See The Woman's Voice, 1915-23.


37. Ibid., 14 July 1925, p.7.
At that point the Labor movement stood for the protection of the home; in the 1930s her stance was the same - only the enemy of 'the family' had changed.

Women's organisations in the 1920s contributed towards an evaluation of the desirability of women entering certain areas of employment on the grounds of its effect on their future capacity as wives and mothers. By strengthening this role for women, and by positing its existence as a key alternative available only to women, they themselves contributed to undermining support for the right of women to economic independence. The contradictions raised by this commitment to dual roles for women can be seen in the activities of the United Associations. In their campaign for the repeal of the Married Women Teachers Act they criticised the measure not only on the grounds that it threatened the economic independence and freedom of women but also on the basis that it undermined the institution of marriage and the family. To drive home their point about the destructive potential of the Act, Jessie Street attempted to persuade engaged couples in the teaching service to announce their intention of living together without getting married as a challenge to the regulations. No teachers however were prepared to offer themselves on this sacrificial altar. The attempt by the Association to use this sensational tactic touches

38. Street, Truth and Repose, p.125.
on what were real and potentially divisive disparities in the policy of this organisation and of the non-party feminist movement generally.

The United Associations actively championed the participation of women in society and government outside the home. Their constitution called for freedom and equality of status and opportunity for men and women and implied that woman's lower status and earning power was not a reflection of inherent inferiority but rather a socially imposed regime which could be reversed by education and legislation. At the same time, although arguing that it should not be the only career open to women, they supported woman's established position in society as wife and mother. The range of reforms sought by the Association included many that would officially accord marriage and maternity a higher status. They lobbied for adequate maternity allowances, child endowment and increasingly in the 1930s for 'wages for wives'. Home-making and child-care emerged in their propaganda as uniquely 'women's work' and efforts were made to raise the status of such work and encourage women to specialise in it. The contradictions within the type of 'feminism' proclaimed by the United Association also merged with those engendered by the Association's class composition.

Pankhurst Walsh and the Australian Women's Guild of Empire skillfully exploited the divided loyalties of organisation women. The dire consequences attending any alteration to the dependent status of women within the family were
illustrated by reference to the conditions of women under Communism. Russian society was depicted as a state where sexual restraint, modesty and chastity had been discarded and men had reverted to 'primitive animalism', where the family had been repudiated and women forced to be self-supporting. In Pankhurst Walsh's view the Communists had instituted a new regime of 'sexual enslavement' for women.\textsuperscript{39} By removing the imperatives which forced the man to labour for and support his family, women were thrown into a hostile environment to 'starve, or live by prostitution'. The attack on Communism merged with the criticisms of feminists. Pankhurst Walsh made frequent references to the 'fact' that there 'are two schools of thought which attack the institution of marriage - the Communist and the modern or feminist school'.\textsuperscript{40}

Those who make a platform of the economic independence of women, do not realise that they are striking at the foundations of private property and Christianity.\textsuperscript{41}

The anti-Communism of the Guild of Empire exhibited a decidedly feminine perspective which helped link the fears of women over the changing status of their sex with the more direct dangers posed to the established economic order by Communism. Although not all organisation women co-operated with the Guild in its work its operations served to highlight the

\textsuperscript{39} Empire Gazette, 28 July 1931, p.4; SMH, 8 April 1931, p.15.

\textsuperscript{40} Pankhurst Walsh Papers, Folder 17, 'Communism and Sex Morality', 1931, p.1.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
conflicts which beset the non-party feminist movement in this period. The disruption to accustomed roles and anxiety over social phenomena exhibited by organisation women in the depression encouraged a reversion to revered traditions and institutions. For the womens' movement the return to the 'old familiar thing' as it related to woman's role did not represent a complete reversal of policy. Support for the sanctity of the home and 'the family', and acceptance of the social importance of woman's role as wife and mother, was merely a reaffirmation of values held all along.

Economic Justice and the 'Family Wage'

Although antagonism to feminist principles was expressed on a number of levels in the 1930s, it was in the area of woman's workforce participation that tensions were most clearly manifest. The deliberate restriction imposed by the state was the dismissal of married women teachers but in Victoria a Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly was instructed to review the effects of increasing femininity in industry. As unemployment figures demonstrated that women were being reabsorbed into industry and other areas of work at a faster rate than men, this attitude hardened. In the early years of the depression, the affiliates of the Australian Federation of Women Voters found themselves fighting a defensive action on behalf of women workers. At the annual meeting of the United Associations in 1932

Jessie Street urged that the delegates' work in the coming year 'must be directed towards protecting the opportunities, benefits and rights obtained by women up to the present'.

In Victoria similar expressions of concern were translated into action by the Women Citizens' Movement in conjunction with the Australian Federation. In 1933, recognising the national growth in hostility towards woman's economic aspirations, they staged a well-attended 'Women's Rally' in Melbourne to protest for women's 'right' to work.

An 'Adam-like' tendency to blame women for many of the ills suffered during the depression was labelled 'absurd and illogical' by the United Associations. Through letters to the press, pamphlets and public meetings they hoped to clarify the causes of the depression and the reasons for the relatively favourable levels of employment among women workers. Behind unemployment for both sexes was the technology of the factory. As labour was increasingly merely tending the machine, Street countered the accusation that women were monopolising available employment by pointing

43. United Associations, Y4482, Dawn, 16 March 1932.
44. Ibid.
45. United Associations, Y4481, Are Women Wage-Earners Responsible for the Unemployment of Men?, Pamphlet no. 3, nd., np.
the fact that women were paid less and thus constituted a cheap labour force. In her book, *Are Women Taking Men's Jobs?* (1935), Muriel Heagney also noted the significance of paying women less than men and argued that women were less affected by unemployment than men because they worked in occupations where the rate of employment was more favourable. Her recognition of the sex segregation of the workforce was fundamental to her critical analysis and suggested solutions to the problems of woman's low status in the workforce. The arguments of the United Associations and others in the 1930s, who claimed that because women's wages were lower than men's employers were substituting women as a cheaper labour force, failed to grasp the fundamental point that the sexual division of labour was socially rather than technically ordained. This confusion on their part was later to prove significant in their examination of the nature of woman's domestic work. In her later writings, Jessie Street, influenced by these arguments, incorporated Heagney's analysis into the United Associations' armoury in defence of women workers, but it remained secondary to arguments about the cheapness of female labour. Street realised the latter argument appealed more directly to self-interest in the male-dominated trade union movement.

Demands for 'equal pay for equal work' had been on the platform of various women's organisations since the late nineteenth century. The concern frequently expressed
in the 1890s was echoed at the Federal Conference of the National Councils in 1926: payment of low wages to women would impel many women 'towards a personally degrading life'. Ruby Rich, deputy President of the Feminist Club, reiterated the message at the National Council meeting on the female basic wage in Sydney in 1927. 'All countries having a low women's wage', she said, 'also showed an alarming increase in vice. If girls' wages were increased it would help them to fit themselves to be the kind of mothers the country desired'. What distinguished the United Association's approach was that they perceived that the concept of the 'family wage' was the site to commence the fight for equality for women. In 1931 a deputation waited on Premier Lang to suggest that employers should pay all workers a single wage and contribute to funds from which the worker could later draw according to family responsibilities. This was a modification of earlier proposals made at the time child endowment was introduced. Lang rejected their suggestion.

Undeterred, the Associations continued to canvass support for their scheme. In 1932 and 1933 they approached trade unions for support, singling out those with a high proportion

46. **Advance! Australia**, September 1926, p.120.
47. **SMH**, 27 May 1927, p.5.
of female members. In March 1934, the Public Service
Association, after negotiations with the United Associations,
applied to the Industrial Commission for an increase in
the female basic wage. As a result the United Associations
was able to appear at the hearing. 49 Mrs. M. Galloway,
Secretary of its Propaganda Committee, asked that the current
method of fixing the female wage as a percentage of the
male rate be abandoned and a full enquiry into the needs
of the woman worker be undertaken. The basis should be

Board and Residence ... not food, rent,
lighting and heating, as ... a female
worker should not be called upon, after
a day's work, to do her own marketing,
cooking, washing, mending, or make her
own clothes. This work is done by a
man's wife, and a single man pays a
boarding house keeper to do it for him. 50

As it stood, she said, the present system failed to reflect
either the family responsibilities of workers or the work
contributions of men and women. The only consideration
for the employer should be the ability and efficiency of
the employee: 'the fact that the worker is male or female,
single or married, is his or her own private affair and
should not concern the employer'. 51

49. United Associations, Y4482, Truth, 21 July 1935.
50. United Associations, Professional and Business Women's
Group, News Sheet, 1934.
51. Ibid.
The Associations' case for a radical reappraisal of the wages system combined justifications based on 'rights' and 'justice' with more pragmatic considerations of social value. Their analysis drew particular attention to the illusory nature of the family wage and its negative impact on social efficiency. Since the war, the number of female 'breadwinners' had greatly increased with widows and deserted wives maintaining families and sisters and daughters helping support others in the family. The position of these women and their dependants was, on its own, socially disastrous but the nation's predicament was further compounded by the fact that even the 'family wage' received by male workers did not adequately cover the needs of the average family. In families where dependants already exceeded the family size adopted for wage fixation, the birth of each additional child brought new financial strain. This state of affairs rendered parenthood an enormous disadvantage. The solution, they concluded, lay in the payment to all workers of a basic wage calculated on the amount assessed by the Industrial Commission as the wage for an adult male worker without dependants. The employer could then pay into family endowment funds the amount assessed for the maintenance of a wife and child. Upon marriage and the successive births of children, each male employee could be paid out of this fund according to his responsibilities.

52. Ibid.
By 1935 the Associations' formula for equal pay involved the introduction of an equal but lower basic wage for men and women, calculated on the needs of two adults and a child with the inclusion of child endowment for other children funded by a tax on employers. In 1936 they amended the formula again to cover the needs of two adults only, with child endowment to cover all children. These schemes went part of the way towards appeasing irate unionists in that the basic wage payment was to include a certain number of dependants rather than be based on the single rate. Both schemes, however, continued to meet with the opposition of a union movement under pressure from the government and employers in the matter of hours and wage levels. O. Schreiber, the President of the Trade Union Secretaries' Association, claimed that the United Associations were propounding a scheme, 'which involves no other results than wholesale wage reduction for men and likewise demonstrable, no improvement whatever in the economic position of women'.

On the basis of the social character and class interests of the United Associations, the union movement felt justified in suspecting their interest in and motivations for

54. United Associations, Y79, pamphlet reprinted from Truth, 12 July 1936.
55. United Associations, Y4482, Truth, 11 August 1935.
a restructuring of the wages system. The Associations, however, succeeded in politicising the issue of equal pay before the unions were willing to do so. Although the Trade Union Secretaries' Association claimed it supported the principle of equal pay, feminists suspected that support was half-hearted. Not until 1937 was any active initiative taken on this issue by the union movement. The tension between feminists and male unionists in this period drew as much on class conflict as on gender politics. Arguably the rejection of the UA equal pay scheme by male unionists reflected the widespread discrimination against women in the labour movement. Although equal pay actions, in conjunction with the battle for economic security for women in the home, did not directly challenge the sex division of labour in the family, it still represented some measure of challenge to patriarchal institutions. In their attempts to remove inequalities from women's workforce experience the Associations attempted to eradicate the grounds from which 'sex arrogance' in men flourished and 'sex bitterness' in women grew. In their demands for economic independence for women the Association and its supporters made some important steps towards breaking the nexus of independence, which for women was institutionalised in arbitration procedures and work structures, as well as being firmly sited in the home.

56. United Associations, Y4482, Dawn, 15 July 1931.
The Wageless Wife and the Burden of Economic Independence

As long as women did their work in the home and received payment only in keep and kind, no objection was made, but the moment they became wage-earners and were paid for the work they did, the cry was raised that such work was not women's work. One is tempted to ask, is it no longer women's work because it is paid? 57

The high public profile of the equal pay campaign obscured another important aspect of the wider struggle for economic equality for women. The United Associations exhibited an awareness of the strong connection between the unwaged work of women in the home and the status of women in the workforce. Although their resultant concern with the status of the woman in the home would mesh with other interests generated by their involvement in the welfare and eugenics movements, their approach to this question was to focus on male privilege in domestic life and the exclusion of housewifery and motherhood from orthodox depictions of 'work'.

By the latter half of the 1930s, the campaign underway since the late nineteenth century to reshape family life into a more rational, scientific form, had reached its apotheosis. This campaign, led by 'experts' and sanctioned by the state, had been supported by a wide range of women's organisations interested in the elevation of national life and the status

57. United Associations, Y4481, Are Women Responsible?
of women. The ideal wife and mother of magazine and manual was depicted as fully conversant with the latest scientific pronouncements on childbearing and rearing, on the nutrition intake of her family and their psychological well-being. Her marital and maternal devotion was no longer to be conceived as merely a private commitment based on love and the maternal instinct. Fanned by the rhetoric of domestic reformers it had become a duty of truly national proportions.58 The acceptance of this ideology, with its emphasis on the ultimate responsibility of the individual woman for the future health and progress of the nation, significantly added to the tensions felt by women in their domestic roles. The provision of clinics and domestic education and the publicity given good mothering, seemed to ensure that only the uncommitted and unnatural wife and mother could fail to fulfil her duties in the prescribed manner. The deprivations suffered by many families during the depression, and witnessed by organisation women in the course of their welfare work, highlighted the gap between social expectations and economic realities for women in the home. The wageless wife was dependent upon her breadwinner to fulfill a role which had become even more socially exacting when the breadwinner was not assured an adequate income. The message

58. e.g. see Feminist Club records, K21802, Dawn, 21 April 1937, report of address by Mrs. Waterworth of the Australian Federation of Women Voters to the League of Nations Association on 'Nutrition and Home Methods'.

itself began to be questioned.

On the appointment of the Federal Advisory Council on Nutrition in 1936 Jessie Street, while welcoming the initiative, sounded a note of caution. It was

... very interesting to know that additional consumption of milk will mean increased communal health, but milk is not cheap ... If any direct benefit is to be derived from the inquiry, some effort will have to follow to ensure that families can acquire the necessary supplies at a cost which can be borne by their incomes.59

A similar note of criticism and questioning of scientific and state dictates about family life began to imbue other areas of interest to women's organisations. In 1937 a deputation from the women's Standing Committee on Infant and Maternal Mortality waited on the NSW Minister for Health with a list of demands designed to arrest the rising number of maternal deaths. The Standing Committee had been active since the late 1920s in efforts to ensure that 'every mother in the State [had] the services of a pre-natal clinic, an obstetric nurse ... a medical practitioner and an obstetric specialist where necessary'.60 The Minister's suggestion that the publicity generated by their campaign had exaggerated

59. United Associations, Y4482, 6 July 1936.

60. Ibid., Y4882, SMH, 2 June 1937; Progressive Journal, 4 October 1935, p.35; Feminist Club records, K21801, 1 June 1937.
the problem of parturition, increased women's anxieties
and contributed to medical complications, enraged the members
of the deputation who argued that wherever a 'fear complex'
existed among young mothers it was 'entirely due to the
dread of economic insecurity'.

Despite their acceptance of the medical profession's increasing
role in the management of childbearing and rearing women's
organisations were no longer blinded by the profession's
assertions of omnipotence. Long the attentive, although
self-motivated, followers of professional advice, women
struck back in the 1930s with accusations of medical and
government neglect and more importantly, with a new perspective
on maternal welfare. During the federal elections in 1937,
and in the NSW elections in 1938, the Standing Committee
on Infant and Maternal Mortality circularised all candidates
and, in September 1938, it convened a conference of affiliated
organisations to discuss the problem.


62. A. Watson Munro, J.C. Windeyer, Grace Cuthbert and
M.A. Schalit presented the 'Medical Point of View'
at the conference and representatives from the following
organisations gave papers for the 'Lay Point of View':
CWA; Feminist Club; Women's Club; Housewives'
Progressive Association; Professional Women Workers'
Association; Salvation Army; Australian Women's
Movement for Social and Economic Reform; Women's
Union of Service; Recreation and Leadership Movement.
See Grace Scobie, Save Australian Mothers ... Conference
Of The Standing Committee Working for the Reduction of
Maternal and Infantile Mortality, Sydney, 1938, p.3.
papers neatly divided into the 'Medical' and the 'Lay Point of View'. Dr. Watson Munro invoked the usual threat of 'national extinction' attendant upon the loss of mothers and infants and pointed to the practices of birth-control and abortion and a related loss of mothers in childbirth to account for the declining birth-rate.63 Although a number of women delegates took up the issue of contraception and abortion in terms of their deleterious effect on women,64 the 'Lay Point of View' was significantly different. Mrs. E. Barron of the Australian Women's Movement for Social and Scientific Research encapsulated the atmosphere pervading the women's delegations when she pointed out that increasing the birth-rate was a secondary consideration:

If the race is to survive, the welfare and health of the mother and child must be our chief concern, as first steps towards physical fitness; and to that desirable end, economic security ranks as a foremost factor.65

The United Associations brought to this demand for financial support of the mother and child a further concern for the status of women's domestic labour. At the time of the Royal Commission on Child Endowment women reformers hesitated about making a claim for direct state financial recognition

63. Ibid., p.7.
64. Ibid., p.17; p.29.
65. Ibid., p.30.
of their work as mothers. Endowment was seen to be a payment made towards the welfare of children. The value of women's work as domestic labourers was not recognised, only their biological role as reproducer of the labour force. Within its campaign for equal pay the United Associations lobbied not only for the introduction of 'wages for wives' which would formally acknowledge the value of the married woman's work within the home and make a wife independent of her husband, but also for the right of married women to work for an income outside the home. Although the questions raised by the 'work' of mothering were submerged in this campaign it still posed a significant challenge to the present organisation of the family. By implication these demands drew attention to the privileged position enjoyed by men in the family. The United Associations was making 'domestic equality' the prerequisite for workplace equality.

In a pamphlet entitled 'Income for Wives, How it can be Managed or the Economic Independence of Married Women', the United Associations set down their conception of marriage as a 'true and legal partnership'. Since its formation, the Australian Federation of Women Voters and its various

66. United Associations, Income for Wives, How it can be Managed or the Economic Independence of Married Women, no. 1, n.d., n.p., [1932-33].
affiliates had been engaged in a battle to ensure that this 'equal partnership' was reflected in the laws governing marriage, divorce and the guardianship of children. As inequalities in these laws varied from state to state they lobbied for a uniform federal law. In their view marriage was neither completely 'natural' nor static but a social institution capable of change. It had

... passed from an act of capture through successive stages to proprietorship, when a wife was classified among a man's possessions along with his house and his ox and his ass ... [to] the stage when it should be recognised as a true partnership between a man and a woman for their mutual benefit, comfort and service. It is only thus that marriage can reach its highest development which should be physical, mental and spiritual companionship.67

In contrast, the contemporary conception of marriage was that the woman existed for the service and convenience of men who assumed their provision of a home for the woman was ample recompense for her household services. They pointed to the increasing number of divorces and the often stormy aspects of some marriages, especially when the wife had no independent income of her own. It was time, they felt, that the vast majority of women, who gave up wage-earning occupations to spend their time caring for their homes and families, gained some more substantial acknowledgement of their sacrifice.

67. Ibid.
In placing the emphasis on marriage as an equal partnership the Association was implicitly criticising the romantic ideal that the woman in marriage did all in return for the love and gratitude of her family. The reality may have been very different but this was introducing different notions of duty and responsibility as well as business principle into the domestic realm. Their presentation of the home and family was not to everyone's liking. In response to the United Associations' proposal that women be made legally entitled to an income from their husbands, Mrs. Grant Forsyth of the WCTU remarked that they would spoil the 'romance' of marriage. The United Associations replied that in their schemes there was no 'costing of companionship' but they were criticising the concept of the home as a 'private retreat'. This concept, central to domestic ideology since the latter half of the nineteenth century, had always been more appropriate for men than for women. For women the home was the daily focus of work. Nonetheless they accepted that within the family the sexes had contributions of a quite separate nature to make. The 'husband's part' was to earn the family income, the wife's, to look after the home and bear and rear the children. Though their work roles differed the contribution of each to family welfare,

68. Feminist Club, K21801, Sun, 2 December 1937.
69. United Associations, Income for Wives.
and ultimately to community life, should be recognised as equally valuable. They stressed the many hours of daily labour, marketing, cooking, cleaning and washing. Women received no time off for amusements and even where creches and kindergartens relieved women of some of their maternal duties, they had still to care for their children at weekends and on 'family' holidays. To highlight the unending nature of women's domestic labours Ruby Duncan, of the United Associations and the Housewives' Progressive Association, launched a campaign to persuade husbands that their wives deserved a night a week off from their duties. 70

In another pamphlet on women and the domestic problem Jessie Street renewed this analysis of domestic labour as 'work'. Reacting to the conception of the housewife's role as 'unproductive', she argued that, although no profit was made in money form by her actions and no commodity that could be bought or sold resulted from her efforts, that was not enough to disqualify housework as labour of real economic value. The labour of men as sailors, soldiers or policemen similarly produced no commodity but they were still considered productive and were allotted a wage. Street argued that while the economic system had changed, household labour had remained in a pre-market stage as in a peasant economy. The development of a system of economics based on payments in cash rather than kind had bypassed the domestic sphere. 71 In this way the wagelessness of the housewife

70. Feminist Club, K21801, Sunday Sun, 13 December 1936.
71. United Associations, Y4481, Jessie Street, Woman as a Homemaker, n.d., n.p., [1939].
was seen as the key to her low status and to the inequitable position of women in all facets of life. Linda Littlejohn, a leading spokeswoman for the Associations, argued the relationship between woman's poor domestic status and her comlementary role in the workforce was responsible for the community's poor evaluation of women's capabilities:

A man's first impression of the value of a woman's service is gained in his own home amongst those who administer to his daily needs. Since the status of these is not covered by law, since they are not entitled to any monetary remuneration for home service, the idea becomes prevalent that woman's service is of little, if any, monetary value. This idea, gathered in the home, is then carried into the business and professional world, and certainly tends to lower the status of all earning women. Any step, therefore, that can raise the position of the home-maker will automatically benefit all women. 72

The efforts of Street in the 1920s and 1930s to raise the status of domestic servants by implementing business procedures and training programmes through her House Service Company, and the co-operation of the United Associations in 1938 with the Domestic Employees' Union attempts to bring servants under the Industrial Arbitration Act, were other strands to a strategy aimed at changing the community's evaluation of woman's capacities and worth. 73

72. Feminist Club, K21802, Sun, 8 February 1938.

73. United Associations, Y4477, Council Minutes, 14 April 1938; 11 May 1939; Executive Minutes, 27 July 1937; 4 May 1939.
The United Associations maintained that the community's evaluation of the social worth of work performed was measured by the amount of payment it commanded. In a modern society where nothing could be acquired without money the person denied an independent income was 'helpless, defenceless and powerless'. Women's home work had no acknowledged monetary value except in divorce proceedings, where a husband could sue a co-respondent for money to be paid to him on account of the services of the wife of which he had been deprived. On this basis the United Associations proffered one solution to the problem of how the monetary value of domestic labour could be calculated: payment to wives could be estimated on the basis of the sum which had been awarded in the divorce court: the wife's 'share of the family income could be estimated at the amount that the court would order to be paid to her as maintenance should the home be broken up'. As an alternative, the payment to a wife could be that portion of the basic wage which was earmarked for the upkeep of the wife. When Street asked 'Who benefitted most from the work of the home-maker?' the answer was, the State. She went on to argue that the housewife should receive some monetary income from the state in acknowledgement of her contribution to community welfare.

74. Street, Woman as a Homemaker.
75. United Associations, Income for Wives.
76. Street, Woman as a Homemaker.
Apart from the more Utopian aspects of the Associations' campaign for 'wages for wives', some significant advances in their consciousness of the role of women in the home should be considered. It laid, if imperfectly, a basis for separating 'womanhood' from the work society gave women. It took to women the proposition that mothering was indeed 'work' and not a natural function like eating and sleeping. Running through the debates about equal pay, child endowment and wages for wives were fundamental assumptions about the work roles of the majority of women: equal pay should be paid where women were doing 'men's work' and the state should recompense women for staying at home to look after their children. Thus men's jobs would be safeguarded and women would be actively encouraged to devote themselves to the home. The 'wages' paid to the housewife, however, would not end the isolation of the housewife or the twenty-four hour responsibility which fell to her. Those arguing for wages for wives did not address the issue of privatisation and the relationship between privatisation and work which could not be measured by orthodox economic methods.

The campaign of the United Associations failed to effect significant change. They pressed for a range of reforms on the assumption that woman's overall position would be improved by the conjunction of these measures. They failed to see that, quite apart from the question of how or non-existent wages, the labour of women was evaluated poorly,
and similarly recompensed, because it was seen as 'women's work' and therefore outside the mainstream labour market. Although aware of the relationship between women's status in the home and in the workforce they did not fully grasp the centrality of the sex division of labour as it operated in both spheres. Even more importantly, their campaigns did not address or come to terms with the special significance of motherhood in the community's evaluation of women's capabilities and social worth.

That the 'domestic equality' sought by the United Associations, and other 'equal rights' feminists, was in itself a contradiction in terms was vividly displayed by their involvement, in this period, in the campaign for equal guardianship rights. For much of the 1920s, galvanised by the public outcry over the Emelie Pollini case, the affiliates of the National Council of Women and of the Federation of Women Voters agitated for a change in the guardianship laws to confer on the mother equal rights with the father, where custody was an issue. In 1930 the United Associations became the leaders in the campaign to amend legislation. In a deputation led by Jessie Street and Marie Byles the case for equality was based on arguments that men and women were equal partners in marriage and parenthood.77 Marie

77. SMH, 19 December 1930, p.8.
Byles, one of the few women then admitted as a solicitor, and a legal advisor to the Associations, widened the issue to include the mother's right of consent in the marriage of minors.\textsuperscript{78} Successive governments had introduced legislation modelled on the British Act of 1926, and allowed the bills to lapse. When passed in 1934 the United Associations celebrated their victory with a 'tea party'.\textsuperscript{79}

This 'victory', the honours for which should be shared equally between the National Council and the Federation affiliates, ultimately proved somewhat illusory. Under the 1934 Act the welfare of the child remained the paramount consideration and the 'equal right' of women to their children, and their 'equal' chances of success in gaining custody, depended on their ability to meet the standards of behaviour considered appropriate for mothers by the Court. The enduring double standard ensured that the behaviour of the mother, especially in terms of moral rectitude, would be rigidly scanned. The women's organisations which had lobbied in support of the guardianship amendment had missed one of the most important points raised by the earlier case of Emelie Pollini. The judgement against Pollini had rested on the fact that the mother had intended to continue her career and she wished to take her child overseas with her,

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{79} United Associations, Y4477, Executive Minutes, 15 November 1934.
out of the jurisdiction of the court, in order to pursue her career. Pollini, by choosing to be the breadwinner for her child rather than an unpaid mother, had effectively run aground on the Court's conception of appropriate behaviour for women as mothers. Millicent Preston Stanley, the President of the Feminist Club, had in her handling of the problem shown some awareness of the implication of the Pollini judgement. In a deputation to the Minister for Justice in 1930 she urged an amendment to the bill in order to provide for the rights of the parent leaving the jurisdiction of the Court, 'for the purpose of earning his or her living'.

She referred directly to the Pollini case, 'in which the Judge's ruling denied the mother custody of the child on the grounds that she was going abroad, even though the mother was shown to be morally and economically the better parent'. As Preston Stanley had perceived, the removal of the child from the jurisdiction of the court was not the crucial issue. What was at stake was the right of the mother to economic independence. If the mother was not permitted to earn an income, and only the father was admitted breadwinner status, the whole notion of formal equality was rendered irrelevant. The United Associations had been less perceptive of the relationship between abstract notions of equality and economic realities for women.

80. Feminist Club, K21801, SMH, 10 February 1930.
81. Ibid.
In a letter to L.O. Martin, their parliamentary ally during the battle for the bill, they suggested that any hold-ups in its passage might be rectified by jettisoning Preston Stanley's 'jurisdiction' clause. 82

The failure of the United Associations and the Feminist Club to comprehend the countervailing aspects of the equal guardianship case, as it related to the economic dependence of women, was somewhat offset by their sustained support for the right of married women to seek work outside the home. The United Associations argued the case for the right of married women to work from two different perspectives. One argument rested on concepts of natural 'rights', and thus they maintained that the right of persons to sell their labour was the basis of all freedoms. Until some provision was made for the economic independence of married women the only way for her to gain this independence was to seek paid employment outside the home. A subsidiary of this argument was 'need' and they demonstrated clearly the need of many women to earn enough to support themselves and their dependants in the same way as men. Many married women, they pointed out, were breadwinners. Any further restrictions placed on their capacity to earn would be socially disastrous.

82. United Associations, Y4477, Executive Minutes, 4 October 1934.
In pursuit of this ideal the United Associations failed to follow through with any suggestions or support for the necessary provisions which would allow a wider group of women to take advantage of this avenue for independence. A common assumption in their statements on this question was that married women, who by choice or necessity returned to work, had the skills which would enable them to offer their 'services in the business and professional world'.

Little awareness was shown of the problems of the married woman worker who had to cope with a lack of skills as well as the prejudice which existed against the older, and therefore more expensive, female worker. It seemed assumed that the married woman worker could command a sufficient wage or salary to enable her to avoid the 'double shift'. One of the Associations' often used justifications for the entry of married women workers into the labour market was their assertion that by taking outside work she in turn could give extra employment by taking on a maid. These 'easy' solutions to the problems of married women workers suggests a perspective limited by their class background.

Overall, the United Associations' campaign on behalf of the married woman worker failed to take into account the extent to which the conditions and resources of married

women varied from class to class. In addition, they made little or no attempt to come to terms with the problem of the married woman worker who was also a mother. Although some feminists suggested that the family might be better off under the care of 'scientifically-trained' child-care experts, they did not offer any practical suggestions as to how this private or public method of child-care might be organised and funded.  

While the campaign for 'wages for wives' ultimately implied that the majority of women would be best served by remaining in the home where they could be recompensed for their domestic labours, the battle for the right of married women to work seemed similarly constrained. A small group of women, rendered exceptional by their education, skills and material resources might be free to participate in economic life. Though seeking this 'right' for all women the United Associations made no allowances for the disabilities which barred other women from any such pursuit of economic independence.

Feminism, Class and the Equality of Women

The fundamental strategy of 'equal rights' feminism was the production of predominantly legal solutions to the discrimination which women of all classes suffered in the home and workforce. The fact that 'equal rights' feminists

84. Ibid.
only partially perceived the range and extent of problems faced by women in this period does not undermine the breadth of their commitment. What is does indicate is the extent to which their perspective and thus their choice of tactics was limited by the conjunction of their feminist consciousness with their basic class interests. The United Associations continued to channel much of their energy into the battle for equal pay. The choice of equal pay as a central issue, the details of their subsequent schemes and their handling of this campaign, highlight internal contradictions which beset the programme of 'equal rights' feminism. On one hand reluctance to assault directly the sex-based structures which controlled the experiences of men and women rendered much of this quest for equality superficial. On the other, constraints deriving from their class position provoked animosity from the labour movement and undermined the Associations' claims to represent all women across the boundaries of class.

The union movement upheld the principle of the family wage and many of the practices which resulted in job demarcation by sex. This was so even in those unions where women constituted a majority of the membership. 85 A few unions including

the Clothing Trades Union in Victoria in the 1920s and the Public Service Union in 1934, had, at the prompting of individual feminists, co-operated in putting forward the case for equal pay. This situation changed rapidly from 1937 in NSW with the formation of the union-based Council of Action for Equal Pay. The new movement arose out of a conference convened by the NSW Clerks' Union in 1937 when over fifty-three organisations, including a number of unions with female membership, as well as organisations such as the United Associations, the Feminist Club and the Housewives' Progressive Association, met to discuss the best means of achieving equal pay. In heavy industry, previously the reserve of an all male workforce, capital investment in key sections and implementation of assembly line techniques was creating the situation where women's labour was increasingly competitive. The support from unions for equal pay was not free from intent to disadvantage the female operative.

The Council of Action claimed equal pay was a matter of economic justice. Under Muriel Heagney's leadership the Council addressed those in the labour movement who supported equal pay as a means to exclude women from 'men's jobs', arguing that the introduction of equal rates would not mean women would lose their jobs or be confined to areas

86. Ranald, 'Feminism and Class', p.277.
of 'women's work' as such belief rested in the unsubstantiated assumption that women were less capable or productive than men. With the establishment of the Council of Action, feminists for the first time in the history of this campaign had the backing of a powerful section of the labour movement. The benefits of this co-operation, however, were almost immediately lost, for the Council sought an immediate raising of the female basic rate to that of the male rate and occupational rates for all jobs regardless of sex. The United Associations, led by Jessie Street, had come to believe that the immediate introduction of this reform would not be acceptable. The Associations recommended that a gradual approach be adopted in narrowing the gap between the wage ratios of men and women. With each fresh declaration of the cost of living further adjustments could be made until such time as wage equality was achieved. When the NSW Clerks' Union, an affiliate of the Council of Action, applied to the State Industrial Court for an equal minimum wage for women, Nerida Cohen appeared for the United Associations to argue instead for a gradual percentage increase. The merit of immediate as against gradual adjustment of women's wages remained unresolved. Cohen argued for the latter as being less disruptive to industry and therefore less likely to produce the response of dismissal of women. Gradual introduction


89. United Associations, Y4477, Council Minutes, 9 September 1937; 13 October 1937.
would gain time for women to demonstrate their ability to be as proficient as men. Such arguments ignored the social causes of the sex demarcation in industry but the Council of Action's case for immediate implementation likewise overlooked these problems. In the ensuing debate, which was both public and protracted, the United Associations was finally forced to withdraw temporarily from the Council.

During the depression years the United Associations fundamental strategy involved a lowering of the male basic rate at a time when wage levels were generally under threat from a government and employer led offensive. In the years of recovery they switched their support to a 'gradualist' scheme, pacing the capacity of the industry to pay. As the wives of employers, and indeed, as employers in their own right, certain members of the United Associations did have clear class interests in pursuing these opposing strategies in line with the changing economic climate. Their class position also made them more aware of the relative acceptability of the various strategies presented to employers and their government supporters. As members of a wider women's movement, which had been lobbying for the implementation of equal pay since the early 1900s, the United Associations members felt justified in allotting to themselves the status of experts in the fight for this goal. In the face of entrenched opposition they measured, and found wanting, a variety of strategies in its defence. Their willingness
to oppose the union movement on tactical grounds also revealed their own suspicions of labour's motivations in supporting this issue. The male-dominated labour movement had long denied economic justice to women in the workforce and by defending the 'family wage' had consolidated the concept of the housewife as an 'unproductive' worker. In the context of this tradition of anti-feminism it was just as predictable that the United Associations would subject labour motivations for supporting the immediate raising of the female wage rate to rigorous scrutiny. The backlash generated by the 'direct' method, could have suggested to some feminists that, not only was the 'direct' method incapable of succeeding but, indeed, that it was designed to fail.

Beyond this clash of class interests and tactical differences more fundamental issues need to be addressed in relation to the choice by feminists and after 1937 by unionists, of equal pay as the pivotal reform in the movement for women's emancipation. In practice, the principle of equal pay for equal work would have constituted an important abstract recognition of women's equality in the workforce. In practical terms its introduction was likelier to produce the segregation of women into designated female industries. The discrimination facing women in education and the acquisition of skills meant equal pay would not have resulted in equal earnings. Both the feminist and union movements,
in their concentration on this single issue, ignored the entrenched nature of the sex division of labour as manifested in the work place. In addition, the perspective of the unions and to a lesser extent that of 'equal rights' feminists, devalued the significance of the extra-legal barriers to women's economic independence which had their basis in the arrangement of work in the home. They did not question the relative significance of equal pay for women or even 'wages for wives' in comparison with the problems of work for women in general. Nor did they ask whether payment of this work compensated at all for the difficulties of childbearing, rearing, domestic work and general care of the family.

In their battle for the emancipation of women the United Associations had challenged sexual stereotyping and its attendant role allocations more extensively than either the union movement or the earlier strain of 'separate sphere' feminism represented by the National Council of Women. They had consistently championed the participation of women in government and all other aspects of society outside the home on the basis of women's equal capacity and right to be seen as contributors to community life. Women's lower status and earning power emerged in their propaganda as a socially imposed regime rather than a reflection of natural inferiority; as such they argued that it could be reversed by education and legislation. At the same time, although arguing that it should not be the only career
open to women, they supported women's established position in society as wife and mother. The contradictions generated by this program were never directly addressed.

The campaigns of the United Associations and the Australian Federation of Women Voters rested on their belief in the ultimate efficacy of integrating women into existing economic structures to achieve their long awaited emancipation. They failed to consider that a far more radical demand than the 'right to work', equal pay or even 'wages for wives', was the right to equal work itself. While home-making and childcare emerged in their propaganda as work uniquely suited to women and while work in the home remained a matter of private production and the responsibility of women alone, there was little chance of women evading the double workload accompanying any full-scale entry into the workforce. Similarly, the struggle over women's access to and opportunities in paid work would, in the estimation of the male-dominated labour movement, always remain secondary while they continued to share with feminists an acceptance of the ideology of motherhood and its attendant unpaid housewifery role. Although the Association acknowledged woman's confinement to the domestic realm, and subsequent restricted participation in paid work, as important factors in undermining that civil and political equality, the strength of the ideologies of motherhood and domesticity ensured that they would not support any major changes in the way
this work was done by the mass of 'ordinary' women. They were unable to recognise that the sexual division of labour in the home and its extension to the workforce was incompatible with the full equality of the sexes.

The United Associations' vision of the social changes necessary for the attainment and codification of women's fullest equality rested on a liberal reformist ideology. Through rational debate, publicity, education and most importantly, legal reform they aimed to attain their goals. The limitations of the attainment of specific legal or economic rights, however, continued to elude them. Reform of the existing laws and formal structures did little to attack the underlying class and gender structures which ordered their daily experiences and options. Moreover, the sweeping nature of the reforms sought took little notice of the difference in class impact of their results. At best, the implementation of the legal and economic reforms championed by the United Associations and other affiliates of the 'equal rights' Australian Federation of Women Voters would have meant a very selective and uncertain equality for women in Australia between the wars.
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