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PAPERS IN LABOUR HISTORY No. 16

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Perth Branch, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History

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Papers in Labour History No. 16, December 1995

Editor: Janis Bailey
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Papers in Labour History seeks to publish material of a serious nature about the historical development of the Labour Movement, and of the history of work in Western Australia. It is intended to carry a balance of contributions from students and workers and veterans of the Labour Movement. Naturally this raises controversial issues and no apology is made for the fact that few readers will be able to agree with all the views expressed here. While the editor has made suggestions regarding each of the contributions these have been of a stylistic nature and have not been intended in any way to interfere with the expression of the views of the authors.

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“Your most grateful servant Janie Shaw”

Sandra Harben*

In Australian society there are many myths about Aboriginal people, one in particular being the notion that Aboriginal people contribute very little to the social and economic well-being of this country. All too often it is said that Aboriginal people are “lazy”, “they lack the necessary education and skills to carry out job tasks” or “they do not know the meaning of work”. These notions have been perpetuated as a result of past perceptions about Aboriginal people and work, and unfortunately, they continue to persist even in contemporary Australian society.

However, it is not the intention of this paper to give a contemporary perspective of Aboriginal people and the world of work, but instead to provide a brief historical account of the working life of an Aboriginal (Nyoongar) woman by the name of Janie Shaw (later Janie Collard) in the 1930s. Janie Shaw’s story gives readers an insight into her working which parallels that of other Aboriginal woman during this period. Janie’s story also reveals how Aboriginal people were subjected to the harsh and oppressive policies of the 1905 Aborigines Act. Letters written by Janie Shaw (my grandmother) to the Chief Protector of Aborigines Mr Neville and other documents form the basis of this story. My aim is not only to enlighten non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal Australians alike about Aboriginal women in the workforce in early Australian society, but also to allow me as an Aboriginal person, to rightfully acknowledge the significant contribution that Aboriginal women made towards the social and economic well-being of this country.

Nyoongar (Baladong people) country is located in the south-western corner of Western Australia. The land extends eastward approximately half way to Esperance, north-west to approximately the small wheatbelt town of Nyoongar and west north-west towards Coorow and across to the coast. These are the general boundaries of country where Nyoongar regional affiliation is located. Nyoongar is the name of Janie’s people within the Baladong group.¹ More specifically, her homeland affiliations were in the central south-west town of Brookton or what Nyoongars refer to as Karlaniny.² Knowledge of *Gnular budjor* (our land) that I possess has been passed on by elders from this area.

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Comparatively recent urbanisation has resulted in approximately half of the 5000 Baladong people becoming resident in the metropolitan area of Perth. Baladong descendants suggest “*Nitcha Ngarlar Noorgjar Wudjuck un Baladong Nyoongar budgar*”, or in the language of *Wedjela* (white person), “this is our relations and our ground”. Other neighbouring Nyoongar societies and extended family clans include the *Wadjuck*, *Yuat*, *Binjarb* and *Njakinjaki*. The language spoken by Nyoongar people is Baladong Nyoongar with various sub-Nyoongar dialects. According to Douglas,³ Brookton is an area central to the dialect of many Nyoongar peoples. This is where the extended family clans homelands of the Baladong Nyoongars are situated. Other neighbouring societies with affiliated languages include the *Duat*, *Wadjuck*, *Binjarb*, and *Wilman Nyoongars*. All of these language groups share common epistemological and ideological knowledge traits. These traits include the creation of phenomena that gave Nyoongars land (*budjar*), our language (*Wangka*) and the religious creation phenomenon of the *Waakal* (serpent). *Waakal* created the shape of the land and the people and gave foundation to the Nyoongar meaning of life. According to Tom Bennell, “Thas a Nyoongar story many years ago”.⁴

The impact of the permanent settlement of the Wedjelas in Nyoongar lands after 1829 resulted in the suffering of my people. The systematic taking of Baladong traditional lands resulted in the disenfranchising of Nyoongar people as they were pushed to the fringes of *Wedjela* society. Farmers excised or annexed large tracts of land. Massive clearing programmes were implemented to allow for wheat farming and pastoral expansion. Nyoongar people became dependent on non-traditional provisions of the dominant *Wedjela* culture - jobs for money, money for *Wedjela* food.

In addition, as miscegenation occurred, a growing population of mixed descent children was inevitable. Many *Wedjelas* were of the view that over time mixed breeding would result in the eventual “dying out” of Nyoongars. However traditional Baladong families are now combined with *Wedjela*, *Yabaru* (northern), *Meenang* (southern) and *Mornang* (eastern) Nyoongar family networks whilst still maintaining the core of Baladong values, beliefs and knowledge.⁵ These elements of Baladong culture are still acknowledged and perpetuated by contemporary Baladong living away from traditional lands.

After World War I, dispossessed Nyoongar people began “hanging around” small south-west country towns in growing numbers and the Government policy of “assimilation” was put into practice. It was the advent of the Moore River Native Settlement. This settlement comprised 10,000 acres of sandy plain country, and was established in March 1918, pursuant to the Aborigines Act 1905, under the administration of the Chief Protector of Aborigines, Mr A O Neville, to “re-educate” the Nyoongar people of the South-west.⁶

Within a year of its establishment, the purpose of the Moore River Settlement expanded to include children of mixed descent, who were taken away from their parents forcibly, so they could also be “re-educated” and trained as domestic servants and farm labourers and thus take their “proper place” as the servants of white society.⁷

Send the boys to the government settlement at Moore River and we’ll have them taught farming, how to handle machinery, and some stock management.⁸

Women were trained as cheap domestic labour, child minders, cooks and cleaners for pastoralists and their families.

I know of 200 or 300 girls in Western Australian who have gone into domestic service and are doing very well. Our policy is to send them into the white community and if the girls come back pregnant our policy is to keep her for two years . . .”⁹

Food rations at Moore River were meagre. For example, Jack Davis described a typical meal at Moore River as:

MOORE RIVER BISTRO

Bread	Fresh Nyoongah loaf, baked on the premises with stone ground flour.
Bull Butter Thick Golden Syrup or Treacle	Rendered dripping Sticky and runny, imported specially from Queensland Thick as axle grease, black as congealed soot. ¹⁰

The Moore River Native Settlement was just one form of control over the lives of Nyoongar people. The 1905 Aborigines Act provided for the appointment of a Chief Protector of Natives who had legal control over every aspect of the lives of Aboriginal people. As a result of the Act, parents were frequently not allowed to be the legal guardians of their own children, Aboriginal people required work permits, travel permits, and marriage permits, specific areas could be declared out of bounds to Aboriginal people, Aboriginal people were not permitted within the precincts of town after nightfall, and reserve boundaries were gazetted.

Janie Shaw (Collard) was born in 1908 in Katanning, part of a family of six children. She was a proud Nyoongar woman forcibly taken to the Moore River Native Settlement during her childhood.

A document obtained from archival material from the Aborigines Department marks the beginning of the Government influence which was to change the course of Janie's life:

The Aborigines Act, 1905 - Section 12 - Regulation 12A

To the COMMISSIONER OF POLICE and all Police Officers within the State of Western Australia.

WHEREAS it is deemed expedient by me, the undersigned, the Minister charged with the administration of "The Aborigines Act, 1905", that :

JANIE SHAW

an Aboriginal, be removed from the Perth District to the MOORE RIVER NATIVE SETTLEMENT and kept therein:

These are therefore to require you forthwith to arrest and apprehend the said JANIE SHAW and her to remove from the PERTH district, and safely convey within the boundaries of the MOORE RIVER NATIVE SETTLEMENT and her safely to keep within such Reserve (or District) during the Minister's pleasure.

Dated this 20th day of January 1927

(Signed)
J Hickey
Colonial Secretary¹¹

The Police were empowered to enforce the provisions of the Aborigines Act 1905 on behalf of the Chief Protector of Natives. The paternalistic and autocratic powers of the Chief Protector who controlled the destiny of Aboriginal people were instrumental in furthering their oppression..¹²

Janie was subsequently taken to the Moore River Native Settlement and a letter was received by Mr Neville on January 22, 1927 stating that "Janie was taken today to the Moore River Settlement. She gave no trouble".¹³ During her time at Moore River, Janie was to be trained as a domestic help to be of "use" as indentured cheap labour for the Wedjelas.

The idea of Janie being at Moore River Native Settlement was not particularly to her liking and soon after her arrival she wrote to Mr. Neville asking for a "situation". The Superintendent, A J Neal, sent a letter to the Chief Protector stating that there were three girls who were now in training at the Settlement, and adding "of course Janie Shaw is anxious to go out and is behaving herself very well and anxious to work. These girls have been told that they would have to wait their turn, and the best behaved and the best workers would be the first to go".¹⁴

Janie took matters into her own hands in a letter to Mr Neville dated March 4, 1927:

Dear Sir,

I am writing to you this letter. Well Mr Neville I think it is time I should writing and ask you if you are still keeping your promise its going on for two months because I am still waiting for the time when you will get me a situation. I think it only fair for your self to get me a place if Dianh Hall can do a worse thing then me I think it up to me to write and find out; what you can do for me I suppose I have got any money in the bank because if I have would you kindly send me a pair of strap shoes Size 4. Well Mr Neville I will be most grateful to you if you will try and get me out from this place as soon as you can I will promise you I will do what possible for Mr Neal and Matron But for the present time I been sick and was unable to do any thing but fancy work I hope I will get better and then be able to do my work well.

So I will close

I remain your sincerely

JANIE SHAW¹⁵

At the time of writing this letter, Janie was 18 years old, yet a trivial decision about whether she could have “a pair of strap shoes Size 4”, or the more important matter of whether and where she should have paid employment were matters both equally at the discretion of the Chief Protector.

Mr Neville, the Chief Protector, made arrangements for Janie to be employed at the house of Mrs Dudley North of Moora. Mr Neville subsequently wrote to Mrs North outlining Janie’s employment conditions:

Mrs Dudley North
MOORA

Dear Madam

Referring to your application through your mother, Mrs Yeo, for a native girl as domestic help, I have to advise you that a girl named Janie Shaw was sent you on the 30th ult.

The conditions of her employment are that she shall receive 7/6d. per week for the first six months, 2/6d. of which shall be paid to the girl direct and the balance, 5/-d., remitted to this office to be banked on her behalf. An account will be rendered to you monthly from this office as the wages accrue due.

It will also be necessary for you to apply to the Officer in Charge, Police Station, Moora, for a permit to employ Janie under the conditions of the Aborigines Act 1905, the cost of which will be 5/-d. per annum.

I also enclose herewith a statement of expenses incurred on her behalf for transport and I shall be glad to receive your cheque in settlement at the earliest possible date.

Yours faithfully

CHIEF PROTECTOR OF ABORIGINES.¹⁶

Janie had already sought Mr Neville's advice about marriage, perhaps implying that she was seeking an escape from her status as a perpetual child under the control of the Chief Protector. In July, 1927, she wrote to Mr Neville:

2 July
1927 Aukfeild
Barberton

Dear Sir

I am writing you this short letter asking you *could I get married when every I like ore have I got to let you know would you kindly* let me know I am not sure what I have to do. I only know once Matron told me to get married and never come back to the Settlement. But I would very much *like you to know* and would you kind try and do you best for me please. But I would like you to get a girl for Mrs North because She one you know who really deserve a girl she is kind and a good lady as far as I can see is very nice and also Mrs Yeo so would you kindly let me know *as soon as you are able*. I am yours sincerely,

Janie Shaw

Mr Neville replied:

7 July 1927

Miss Janie Shaw
Oakfield
BARBERTON

My dear Janie

I received your letter of 2nd inst., and must confess that I do not altogether understand what it is you wish to know. So far as marrying is concerned, the position is that no clergyman or District Registrar would be likely to celebrate a marriage between you and any white man without first securing my permission. However, of course I should like to know what your intentions are, and whether there is any man paying his addresses to you whom you are included to accept. Please do not hesitate to let me know the position in order that I may be able to help you.

If you did get married I should, of course, try and find a girl to take your place and am glad to know that you have been such a good girl since you have been with Mrs North, and I know that she likes you as much as you have appreciated her kindness to you.

Yours faithfully

CHIEF PROTECTOR OF ABORIGINES

Janie's reply indicated that the Chief Protector had jumped to the wrong conclusions:

12 July 1927

My Dear Sir

I have received your ever-kind letter and was pleased to hear every kind word you at to say and I am going to let you know that the man I want to marry is a half cast very fair like my colour and I will let you know his name is Joe Taylor he works for New Norcia and I am sure you know Some of the Taylor because one got married to a girl from the Settlement So that all I can I will let you later on about getting married I would very much like you to keep it to yourself for awhile until I really know what day I am able to get married.

Would you kindly Send me Some money up with Mrs North as She is calling to See you on a week holiday to Perth on Thursday I want to go for a weekend.

I didn't go in July.

I am your most grateful servant Janie Shaw.

After weeks without a respite from working at Mrs North's, Janie wrote to Mr Neville seeking permission to spend the weekend in New Norcia. Mrs. North agreed that it would be a good opportunity for Janie to "enjoy herself". However it was clear that Janie had other intentions, one of which was not to return to her place of employment. Mrs North subsequently wrote to Mr Neville saying that she was surprised that Janie Shaw was not returning to her employment. Janie had returned to Perth. Mrs North believed that Janie was very happy and that they did everything that they possibly could for her. Her leaving had apparently put the family in a predicament; in Mrs North's words, "it has put us in a very nasty position as I am without any help at all at the moment, and shearing is a very busy time. *I did not think Janie would be allowed to treat us like that ...*".¹⁷

Another situation was found for Janie at Brookton. Mrs Mott, her new employer, wrote to Mr Neville as follows:

Brookford
Brookton
Oct 24th, 1972

To Manager
Aborigines Department Perth

Sir

In reference to the girl Janie Shaw I am willing to employ her at 10/- weekly as good advice

of her being experience in domestic work.

I would like to mention here I do not think 5/- shillings per week is sufficient to keep a girl in clothes while out at work. There is very little to be bought for 5/- Shillings those times, and the girl must be kept clean and tidy so I hope you will see your way clear to allow her a little more.

Also there is another thing I would like to mention I *suppose* I would have full control of her while in my employment.

The reason I mentioned this is there are a lot of Blacks about here and I *couldn't* take her going to them.

So please make her understand she has too what I tell her.

I am good to my girls. I will treat her the same as a white girl - if she is a good girl its a good home here for any girl.

Mrs M A Mott
Brookford, Brookton

Mr Neville replied:

26 October 1927

Mrs MA Mott
Brookford
BROOKTON

Dear Madam,

Your letter of the 24 inst. re Janie Shaw just received.

Perhaps I did not explain the matter sufficiently. In addition to the 10/- weekly payable by you, you would be required to provide the girl's working clothes and boots, bedding and reasonable medical attendance. If Janie required a "best" dress, hat or shoes, etc., such might be purchased by her from her banking account kept at this office. She already has a little in hand.

Janie is an experienced and capable girl, clean and tidy, and will have no desire to mix with the aborigines as she is a quarter-caste and nearly white. You would certainly have to direct her ways and I should like you to control her as far as you possibly can. She belongs to the Roman Catholic Church.

If everything is in order, I shall be glad if you will wire me, when I will at once send Janie forward. She is waiting in Perth.

Yours faithfully,

CHIEF PROTECTOR OF ABORIGINES

Mrs Mott signed the necessary application form:

**THE ABORIGINES ACT, 1905
APPLICATION FOR PERMIT FOR EMPLOYMENT ON LAND.**

To the Police Officer in charge of the Police Station at -
BROOKTON

insert name I, Mary Ann Mott of Brookton
in full and

and address hereby apply for a permit to employ within the
YORK Magisterial District on land

+ **insert name** **JANIE SHAW (OR JANE SHAW)** an aboriginal
(or male half-caste under the age of fourteen years or
a female half-caste).

Dated the fifth day of
November, 1927
(Signature) Mrs A Mott

REPORT OF POLICE OFFICER

To Chief Protector of Aborigines

(handwritten note)

I have to report that Janie Shaw (or Jane Shaw) appears to be doing well at Mrs Mott's place.
I think the girl will have a good home there.

Brookton

5.11.27

J Hess.

Neville responded:

11 November 1927

The Officer in Charge
Police Station
Beverley

Will you please issue to Mrs M.A. Mott of Brookford, Brookton, a single permit for the
employment halfcaste Janie Shaw wages 5/- direct to Janie and 5/- to be forwarded to this
department.

The permit should be issued free and endorsed "Fee paid at head office."

CHIEF PROTECTOR OF ABORIGINES

At Brookton, Janie finally settled and married Mr Frederick John Collard, otherwise known as “Ginty”. Janie had had time to reflect on her situation and the possibility of freedom that was achievable through marriage. This was an option she could contemplate herself even though the restrictive powers of the Chief Protector required his permission. Perhaps Janie had been influenced by advice given to her by the Matron at Moore River, that is, “to get married and never return to the settlement.”¹⁸

Even after marriage Janie and her new husband were subjected to severe restrictions. They were not allowed to mix with other Nyoongar people, or live in the Brookton area. For example, a letter from the Chief Protector of Aborigines dated December 9, 1927 states, “I have today written to Mr O’Halloran, giving my consent providing you do not reside in the native camp at Brookton when you are married”. Janie was told that she had to live with her prospective husband’s father, old Collard, a white man.¹⁹ Although she abided by this condition for a time, Janie and Fred eventually returned to again become part of the Brookton Nyoongar community.

Whilst living in and around Brookton both continued to work very hard, but in return they were given little monetary reward. They were paid three or four pounds a week and negotiated other necessities like flour, eggs, a sheep, and second hand clothes for their survival. Throughout Western Australia in the early 1900s most Aboriginal people were rewarded with food, clothing, tobacco, and other necessities in return for their labour, in other words Aboriginal people were generally “paid in kind”. This included the pastoral industry in the North-west, where Aboriginal people were the mainstay of the region’s economy. There was no any meaningful, formal wage justice for Aboriginal people.

Janie’s story highlights the harsh effects of Government policy, embodied in the 1905 Aborigines Act. It has been suggested by many historical commentators that the Act was not a measure “for the better protection and care” of the “natives”, but was used as an “instrument of control, and ruthless control at that.”²⁰ Sadly for subsequent generations who are still trying to discover their roots and their heritage, the policies were aimed at the cornerstone of Nyoongar existence - the family. Despite this, many Nyoongar people today are still fiercely proud of their history and their culture. Their history has been handed down in the oral tradition, and many of the Nyoongar community now living in Perth have very strong ties to and knowledge of the lives of their families in and around the country towns of the south-west.

The notion that Aboriginal people contributed very little to the social and economic well-being of this country is a myth. As a Nyoongar, and knowing my Nyoongar oral history, I know that

Aboriginal people were not lazy, they knew the meaning of work and they had the necessary skills to carry out job tasks. However, as a university graduate who majored in Industrial Relations, I can only now fully understand why and how Aboriginal people were exploited and seen as cheap sources of labour, as more often than not they were rewarded for their labour by “payment in kind”. The irony of this situation is that the fact that wedjela society has strong beliefs about how work should be organised, and who should work for what rate of pay, or in other words, the white Australian belief of a “fair day’s pay for a fair day’s work”. Despite this, the broader Australian society did little to challenge the inequity of working conditions and wages for Aboriginal people. But then again, why would they? Wedjelas generally recognised the economic value of both the land and the Aboriginal people. Both had value to be exploited.

-
- 1 T Bennell, (1991) *Kura Nyungar Language and Culture Centre*, Bunbury, W.A. p.v.
 - 2 T Bennell, Oral History, (1980)
 - 3 W Douglas, (1982) *Writing the SouthWest Language* W.A. College of Advanced Education, Perth, W.A.
 - 4 Bennell, op cit p.3.
 - 5 F Collard, Oral History (1991)
 - 6 T Bennell, Oral History (1989)
 - 7 Wheatbelt Aboriginal Corporation, (1992) *Pictorial Collection of the Moore River Native Settlement 1917 to 1965*), Mogumber Heritage Committee, Moora, W.A. p.3.
 - 8 K Chesson, (1988) *Jack Davis a Life Story*, Dent, Melbourne, p.20
 - 9 Ibid, p.29
 - 10 Ibid, p.26.
 - 11 G. Bolton, (1981) *Black and White after 1897 - A New History of Western Australia* , UWA Press, Nedlands, WA p.131
 - 12 Native Welfare Personal File of Janie Shaw (hereafter “File”)
 - 13 File
 - 14 File
 - 15 File
 - 16 File
 - 17 File
 - 18 File
 - 19 File
 - 20 Biskrup P (1983). *Not slaves not citizens: the aboriginal problem in Western Australia, 1898-1954* UQP, London.

Sugar And Spice: Women And Work At The Mills And Ware Biscuit Factory

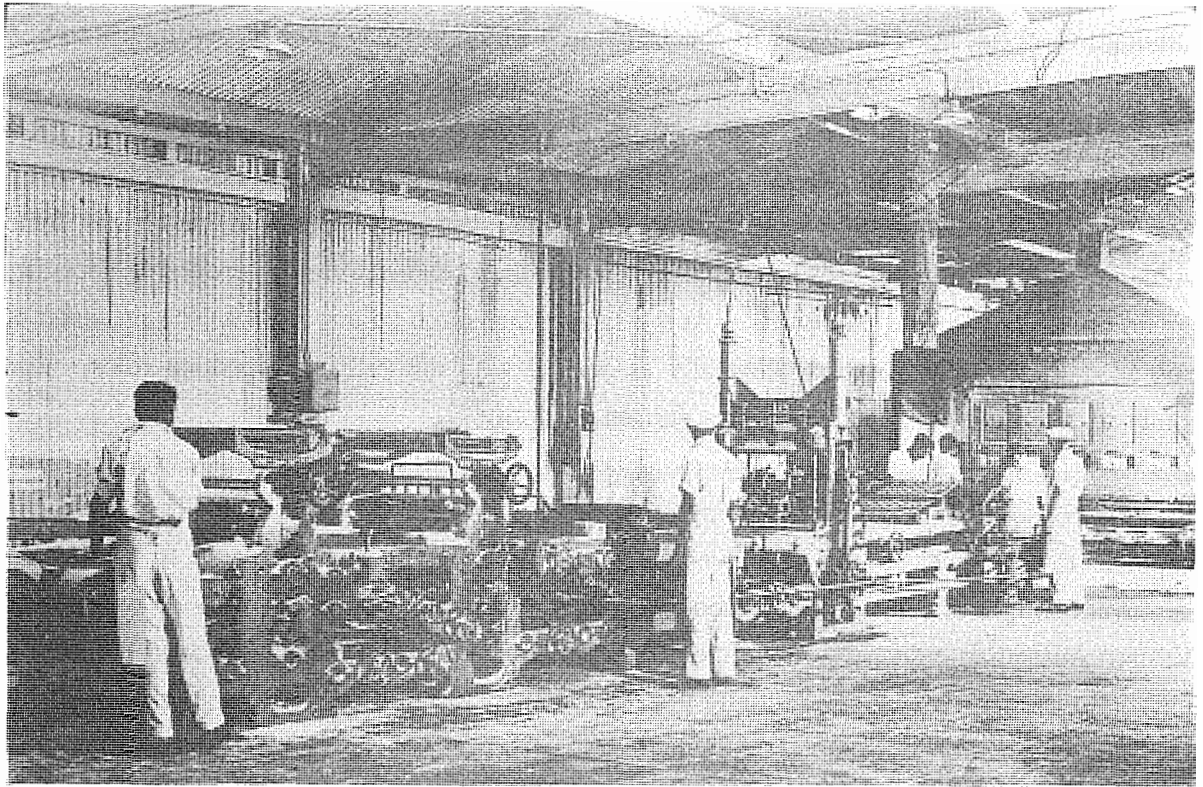
Ann Delroy and Phyl Brown*

In October 1991, Arnott, which became the major shareholder in the Mills and Ware company in 1973, announced the forthcoming closure of the factory. Any business closure is a significant and dramatic event for the workers concerned, but this was particularly significant. Mills and Ware, later Arnott, Mills and Ware, had operated for nearly 100 years in South Fremantle. For much of its life, it had been one of the largest single employers of women in an industrial enterprise in Western Australia and, following the period of mass migration after the Second World War, a large employer of workers from non-English speaking backgrounds - initially from southern Europe and more recently from South East Asia. At the time of closure, 90% of the workforce were women and 75% were born overseas. Fourteen languages were spoken in the factory. It also held a very significant place in the Fremantle community; generations of Fremantle residents had worked there and all in its vicinity enjoyed the sweet aroma of baking biscuits and cakes.

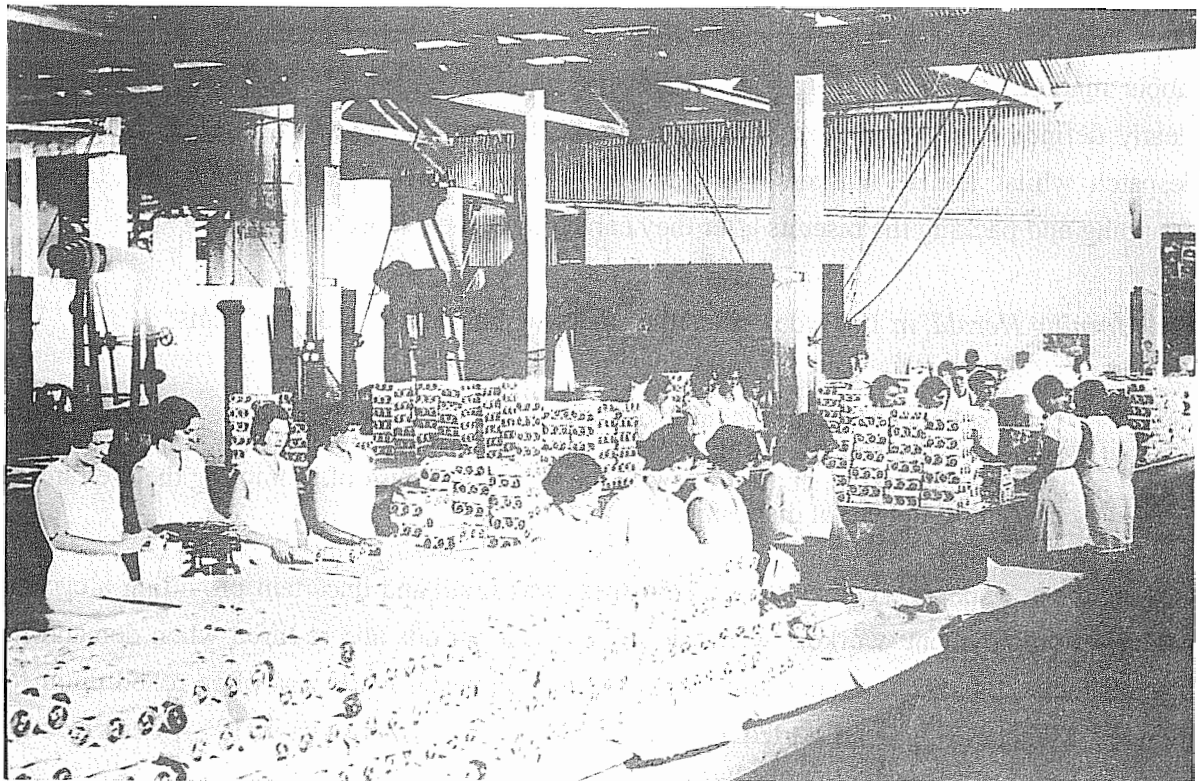
When closure was announced, a project to document the factory was initiated. It involved a range of organisations and individuals including the Western Australian Museum, the Trades and Labor Council, the Food Preservers Union, State Library of Western Australia, Fremantle Council and Library. An industrial photographer was employed to undertake a photo-documentation of the factory before closure and two oral historians were employed to undertake a double-faceted oral history project: one focussing on the history of the factory and workers, the second focussing on the impact of redundancy. The Western Australian Museum, whilst helping to manage these projects, collected artefacts for a proposed exhibition. Repeated attempts to obtain archival material from Arnott's management were unsuccessful.

This paper examines the experiences of women working in the factory. It relies heavily on the bank of oral histories generated from the documentation project, together with scant documentary sources, and official records. A number of key issues have been addressed including the gender division of labour, the double day of women, the impact of new technology on women's employment in the factory, scientific management in the workplace, and the experience of migrant women.

* Ann Delroy and Phyl Brown are Curators in the History Department of the Western Australian Museum



Men Working on the ovens, 1900s. Courtesy Western Australian Museum



Women packing biscuits in the Mills and Ware Biscuit Factory, 1930s. Courtesy Western Australian Museum

Although work has been the focus of much research in the last few decades, women's role in the workforce, until recently, has been comparatively neglected. Their work experience **is** different to that of men. Through ideology, men have been sanctioned as primary participants in the paid workforce. This was confirmed legally by the Harvester decision in 1907: **women** were to be wives and mothers. However, there was always tension in the model as some women existed outside the package of 'family' and others, through family economic necessity had no option but to find paid work. At the same time, some paid work was the province of women, and their cheap labour - usually associated with domestic or repetitive roles - was vitally important to the expanding industrialised economy.

With the consolidation of manufacturing in Western Australia by the turn of the century, in response to the gold boom, new avenues of employment became available to women as employers sought cheap, unskilled labour for their factories. By 1902, 10% of workers in Western Australian industry were women.¹ Despite this, women in paid work were penalised: financially through wages substantially less than men's, through lack of employment options and rigid segregation of 'men's' work and 'women's' work, and through expectations that unpaid domestic work in the home was 'women's' work and to be carried out in addition to paid employment.

Clear lines of sexual division of labour had been long established in the Western Australian labour market. By 1903 at Mills and Ware, fifty to sixty 'girls and boys' were employed in clearly defined areas of work.² The male workers were employed in mixing, baking and despatch whilst female workers were confined to the more repetitive, unskilled tasks of wrapping and packing the biscuits after they came out of the ovens.³

The *Morning Herald*, in 1903, described the emerging business in glowing terms

The workers of both sexes are cleanly and neatly dressed. Each department has its own area divided by partition walls and the ensemble is that of a busy hive of intelligent workers, putting zest into the pleasurable task of promoting the welfare of a splendid industrial disposition.⁴

Despite the newspaper's enthusiasm, the business was small and uncertain providing a cyclical pattern of employment: workers were laid off in slack periods and re-hired when demand for biscuits increased. For women a temporary return to domestic work was often relied upon for income. Mabel Pilling, who started work at the factory as a young girl in 1914, described the business as

a poor place, they were only feeling their feet ... there'd be perhaps a month at a time we'd have to be put off because there was no work ... so I had to go into service ... but I didn't like it ... So as soon as the factory was asking for girls again, I'd go back ... I liked the company of the girls and it was a different atmosphere

altogether to working for someone.⁵

During the First World War, business was confident as the factory turned to the production of biscuits for the Services. Staff increased by more than 25% and the factory operated from 7.30am on Monday to 7.30pm on Saturday.⁶ Women temporarily performed traditional 'men's' work of taking biscuits off the trays as soon as they came out of the ovens.

In the Depression years, when a temporary decline in business was experienced, workers' security was again uncertain. The first to be laid off were women and men over the age of twenty-one years when the adult wage had to be paid.⁷ Often jobs were lost to young girls, the cheapest source of labour. Employment of women, especially young girls, often increased during the Depression as employers sought the cheapest labour source. Phyl Subert was sixteen years old when she joined Mills and Ware in 1930 as a telephonist. She recalls that many of the girls employed then were her age because 'that was the year they were getting rid of the older ones'.⁸

In the local community Mills and Ware became known as the 'finishing school'. The term related to the fact that at fifteen years of age many girls, because of family economic pressure, had to leave school to work. In Fremantle, Mills and Ware was one of only a few places where young women could find employment and so it was there that they completed their education.⁹

Cultural mores dictated that 'women's place' was in the home and conditions of women's paid employment related to current ideology. For example, when the first minimum wage was handed down in 1926 in Western Australia, the difference between the male and female rates of pay was enshrined in the ideology of the family - the average worker was male and the breadwinner.¹⁰ The first minimum wage was 56% of the male rate of £4.5.0 per week.¹¹

Because of the lack of unionisation amongst women there was little hope of change. Indeed, 'unions, no less repositories of the cultural mores about women ... had a patchy record when it came to the organisation of women workers in Western Australia'.¹² Union involvement was considered the province of men and domestic duties limited women's opportunities for activities outside the hours of paid employment. There was, however, one very long and significant strike over physical conditions in the factory in 1939 which lasted for seven weeks. The outbreak of the Second World War was the catalyst to end the strike, with nearly all conditions being met by the company including seating, toilets and change rooms.¹³

By 1939 Mills and Ware, already one of the State's largest employers of women, had a female staff of 53% which rose to 60% in 1941.¹⁴ After 1942, as a result of the Manpower Directorate during the War, the number of female staff increased dramatically when the factory took over production of biscuits for the defence forces. At this time 69% of the workforce were

women.¹⁵ Many additional staff were older married women who had worked at the factory when single and now were employed in the hot and heavy mixing process on the ovens. Often it was only the older women who were physically capable of lifting the heavy trays of biscuits.¹⁶

Almost all areas of secondary industry experienced an increase in women's employment during the War, food processing recording a massive increase of 93%.¹⁷ Win Wray recalled that when Mills and Ware advertised for women to do 'men's' work, there was no shortage of applicants and all types of women came - 'some of them were really strong'.¹⁸ The Women's Employment Board, established during the War, decreed that those women who could prove that they were doing 'men's' jobs would be awarded 90% of the male rate of pay. This increase was granted to women 'selecting and assembling goods for packing' in the Mills and Ware factory in December 1943.¹⁹ However, the Award delivered in January 1945 shows a return to pre-war practice with women receiving just over 50% of the wage received by their male counterparts.²⁰

After the War, Mills and Ware continued to employ more women than men, with a drop of only 4% between 1946 and 1951, but only rarely did women retain traditional 'men's' jobs.²¹ The Second World War did not institutionalise change to the gender divisional structure of the labour force. On the contrary, as Gail Reekie argues, Government intervention cemented existing divisions between 'men's' work and 'women's' work and between high status, highly paid work and low status, poorly paid work. Women employed in traditional 'women's' work were prevented from moving up the occupational hierarchy, and women employed in non-traditional areas had little opportunity to continue after the War.²² The increased proportion of women in the Mills and Ware workforce after the War was based on two other factors: firstly, when the production of fancy lines was resumed after the War, more work in icing of cakes and creaming of biscuits was generated - 'women's' work! Secondly, increased production created a need for more wrappers and packers, also traditionally 'women's' work.²³ The sexual division of labour into traditional 'women's' work and 'men's' work was a pattern which continued until the factory's closure in 1992.

Technology of some kind had been part of production processes at Mills and Ware since William Mills' first hand-turned biscuit machine. By 1903 all mixing, cutting and baking was done mechanically.²⁴ Increasingly machinery was used not only to improve production but to define and regulate the work of women on the factory floor. The first automatic oven - with a continuous band to carry biscuits through their baking time - was introduced after World War II and, in 1961, the first wrapping machine was installed.²⁵

Each innovation affected women whose work was generated and meted out by machines. Each technical innovation lessened the handling during the production and required fewer women for individual processes. New wrapping machines reduced the number of women on the packaging floor from 126 to 70. Casual labour was increased saving management costs in superannuation and holiday pay and providing a flexible set of workers who could be moved in and out of work daily as they were required.

The introduction of new technology was part of the 'management boom' which swept across Australia in the 1950s and 1960s as production experts were employed in industry, large and small, to implement Taylorist strategies. The aim was to maximise output in a given time by reorganising and controlling the labour process. Labour intensive, subdivided and repetitious work was often targeted for time-and-motion studies and individualised wage incentives.²⁶

At the Mills and Ware factory time-and-motion studies were first introduced in the 1950s. Emma Ciccotosto recalls that soon after she started working at the factory, and when Arnott became a shareholder in Mills and Ware in 1953, experts were sent from Sydney to improve production

They employed a couple of men to study us working. They stood by us with stop watches in their hands and worked out how long it took us to do everything ... I worked with one of these men, George Lambert, for some time while he figured out a system of rates of pay. Management liked this system. They felt they were getting the best out of their workers and it suited me. I was a fast worker. I could wrap 3500 packets of biscuits a day and could earn ten shillings or more a day extra. But the bonus system didn't suit everybody.²⁷

Some found the work hard, others did not, but it was always continuous. Cooled biscuits had to be wrapped, cellophaned, then packed into cartons. The work required speed, deftness and judgement. There was often competition among the women to 'cellophane' for an efficient wrapper whose biscuits could be relied on to stay packaged. This meant that cellophaning could be completed more rapidly thus making it more likely for the worker to reap the benefits of the bonus system.

The individual bonus system was replaced by the group bonus system which included all the workers on a particular line. This was even less successful than the scheme for individuals. Most women were aware of the implication of proposed bonus systems and the effects of time and motion studies conducted by production experts. They urged: 'slow down a bit because if you slow down, when the real bonus comes you can speed up.'

Time and motion studies were also employed at Mills and Ware to cut down the number of workers. Betty Mills recalls that

May (forewoman) chose me to show that we needed two girls packing off at the end of the belt ... I thought I was so wonderful ... so efficient ... I didn't realise that what I was doing was what May didn't want me to do. She wanted me to let the biscuits go everywhere and be a big mess so that we'd have to have two girls ... I realised too late that May was so angry with me for keeping up ... I'd shown them it could be done ... that meant only one girl packing off and it was my fault!²⁸

The pace of conveyer belts was adjustable, a necessity for different types of biscuits and different processes, but it was often 'a struggle to keep up' with the belt. The work output of women could be increased by varying the speed of the belts. Lillian Last who worked at the factory for many years reaching the rank of forewoman described the process

There were times when they would set the machines up in the morning and the girls would know they were sped, and if the machine was bringing the biscuits through too quickly and the girls couldn't pack them off, they'd run off the end of the belt - well, that was wastage ... management would then slow things down.²⁹

Management used this ploy when demand for a product had increased or if they were trying to pick up time after a mechanical breakdown. It appears that women tolerated a certain increase in belt speeds but revolted at what they considered an excessive rate. At about this same time - a time when women from non-English speaking backgrounds were being employed - women speaking different languages were placed side by side eliminating or reducing the possibility of slowing down by talking whilst working.

The explosion of technology from the late 1970s, dictated not only women's rate and type of work, but even whether they could be employed to work on the factory floor. The ideal packer was likely to be the most efficient and least likely to be effected by injury and, presumably, resulting claims

You couldn't be eleven or twelve stone because you couldn't operate on the line. Ideally if you were fit, five foot six and of trim build, you could work on a packaging line and have no problems. But if you were short, you couldn't reach across the belt then. 5' 10" would probably be the limit. Being too tall they were over-stretching the belts ... damaging backs.³⁰

The double day served by working women has been documented by numerous writers; for many female workers at Mills and Ware this was a daily reality. Single girls living at home were an exception. In addition to working a full or part-time day at the factory, it was expected that wives and mothers would also do the shopping, cooking, cleaning and child-rearing. Women workers repeatedly had to 'juggle and compromise' in their effort to live out the occupational consequences of motherhood and paid employment.³¹ Between the 1950s and up to the 1970s, child care in Fremantle was extremely limited and expensive. Many mothers, of all ethnic backgrounds, working at Arnott, Mills and Ware could do so only with the support of

a mother or another family member. Sometimes a woman worked part-time at night so that a husband could mind children after his work.

Although many women spent almost their entire working life at Arnott, Mills and Ware, and it often amounted to decades, their employment was not concurrent. It was common for a woman to work until she was expecting a baby. As there was no maternity leave, she was forced to retire for a time. This pattern of taking time out to bear children then returning to paid work was an accepted part of a woman's work cycle. The pattern caused conflict and anger at closure of the factory in 1992 when redundancy packages were calculated on the basis of continuous employment, not total number of years worked. One woman who worked between 1955 and 1992, a thirty-seven year period, but left briefly to have three children, had only nineteen recognised years of service. These were the years worked consecutively after the birth of her last child.

Many workers at Mills and Ware after World War II were immigrants - from the United Kingdom, Italy, the former Yugoslavia, Portugal, Spain, Poland and more recently, Asia. Most women of different ethnic backgrounds had little formal education. Migrant women from non-English speaking backgrounds generally worked in areas of low status, pay and conditions but it was a position shared by English-speaking women. However, there was less opportunity for women of non-English speaking background to become upwardly mobile and advance to the position of forewoman or supervisor.

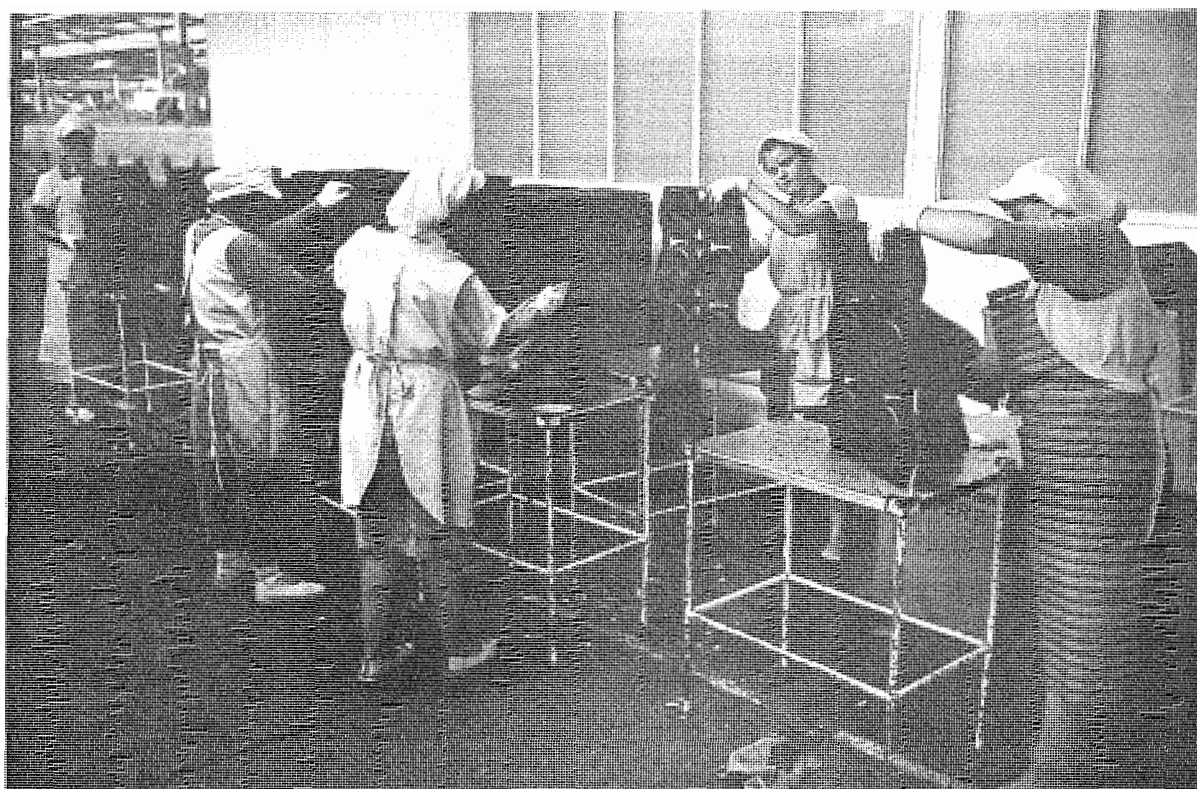
The company was tolerant of migrant workers and for good reason: these women were dexterous, hard-working and tended to stay for many years, sometimes thirty or forty. Language was not a barrier to employment; women barely able to speak English were employed. It was, however, a barrier to promotion within the factory or movement out of factory work.

The experiences of women on the factory floor at Mills and Ware, later Arnott, Mills and Ware, were universal. Women have been the lowest paid of workers in the factory doing the most repetitive, routine work. Except for inroads made by a few women as machine attendants (not operators) and laboratory workers in recent years, the gender division of labour was entrenched.

Generally, different work areas for men and women reinforced the gender separation. Clothing, different for men and women, visually distinguished the sexes and generated messages about social activity. Men wore overalls or shirt and trousers, suited to action, women wore a dress and apron, functional clothing but synonymous with domesticity. Apprentices in trades were almost always male; rarely did these boys do 'women's' work. In



“Men’s Work” in the mixing room, 1992. Photographer Skip Watkins.
 Courtesy Fremantle City Library - 3287



“Women’s Work” washing cake tins, 1992. Photographer Skip Watkins.
 Courtesy Fremantle City Library - 3267.

speaking of themselves, female workers invariably used the term 'girls' with all the word's connotations of gender and inexperience, while males were always 'men' denoting adult males.

Overtly and covertly gender divisions were reinforced and perpetuated through work and management practices at Arnott, Mills and Ware biscuit factory. Women juggled and balanced their dual roles of unpaid wives/mothers and paid employees in the workforce. That this was the natural order of things was undisputed by most female employees.

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- ¹ Carolyn West, 'An Economic Overview: The Development of Manufacturing in Western Australia from 1892-1902', unpublished essay, Murdoch University, 1992, p. 20
- ² Supplement to the Morning Herald, 1 September 1903
- ³ Shirley Booth, 'In the Factory: "Burnt Fingers": Mills and Ware Biscuits 1898-1952', The Murdoch Ethos, Murdoch, p.80
- ⁴ Supplement to the Morning Herald, 1 September 1903
- ⁵ Quoted in Jan Carter, Nothing to Spare - Recollections of Australian Pioneering Women, Victoria, 1981, p.79
- ⁶ Margaret Dawson, 'The History of the Development of Mills and Ware Biscuits Pty', unpublished essay, n.d., p.14
- ⁷ Booth, 'In the Factory', p.82
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Ibid., p.90
- ¹⁰ Sally Kennedy, 'Segregation for Integration: Women and Work in Factories and Shops in Western Australia during the Great Depression', Studies in Western Australian History, Vol.V, 1982, pp. 41-2
- ¹¹ Ibid., p.42
- ¹² Ibid., p.43
- ¹³ Booth, 'In the Factory', pp.85-6
- ¹⁴ Ibid., p.84
- ¹⁵ Gail Reekie, 'Women's Paid Work During World War Two in Western Australia', Honours Thesis, Murdoch University, 1982, p.55
- ¹⁶ Booth, 'In the Factory', p.84
- ¹⁷ Reekie, Women's Paid Work, p.51
- ¹⁸ Booth, 'In the Factory', p.84
- ¹⁹ Reekie, 'Women's Paid Work', p.56
- ²⁰ Booth, 'In the Factory', p.85
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Supplement to the Morning Herald, 1 September 1903
- ²⁵ Dawson, 'The History of the Development of Mills and Ware Biscuits Pty', unpublished essay, n.d., p.25
- ²⁶ Chris Wright, 'Taylorism Reconsidered: The Impact of Scientific Management within the Australian Workplace', Labour History No. 61, May 1993, p.43
- ²⁷ Emma Ciccotosto and Michal Bosworth, Emma: A Translated Life, Fremantle, 1990, pp. 109-10
- ²⁸ Interview with Betty Mills, 1992 (interviewer, Stuart Reid)
- ²⁹ Interview with Lillian Last, 1992 (interviewer, Stuart Reid)
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Pamela Daniels and Kathy Weingarten, 'Mother's Hours: The Timing of Parenthood and Women's Work', in P Yoydanoff (ed.), Work and Family: Changing Roles of Men and Women, California, p.211

Em Reilly: A Perth Trouper

Mark Turton*

In 1984 I recorded Emily O'Reilly (stage name Em Reilly) talking and playing piano at her home in Bayswater. She was 82 years old with a forthright, no-nonsense quality in her speaking style and a strong, clear technique in her piano playing.

My memory of this day was of virtually leaving the tape running while Emily controlled the interview by playing a tune and then, without pausing, swivelling around on her piano stool and describing the background to that music. My role therefore, was very minimal!

I met Emily in 1982 when she and I both worked as accompanists at the W A Academy of Performing Arts. I was impressed by her "trouper" qualities as well as her musical technique. She was a woman who still had, at the age of 82, the right amount of energy and uplifting style in her piano playing to get a class of dancers moving.

Emily began her career at the age of thirteen playing for silent films in Greenbushes and later in Perth. She then led one of the first dance bands at the Temple Court Ballroom, (later The Embassy), had her own band at 'The Unity' for 17 years as well as playing on 'The Emerald', a weekend ferry running between Perth and Garden Island. She also played in the pit as musical director for Bruce Carroll's Tivoli Theatre, (now demolished), which was part of the Shaftsbury Hotel complex in Beaufort Street. It had been a popular vaudeville and variety theatre since the early 1900s and many great international and Australian theatre personalities appeared there – right up to its last days in 1949. Emily worked there during most of the 1940s as well as touring Australia and New Zealand.

Emily is part of a wider tradition of women pianists brought into focus by John Whiteoak¹:

.....women were not only required to provide piano accompaniment for home entertainment whether or not the appropriate sheet music was available - but were also strongly identified with the teaching (and performing) of improvisatory piano accompaniment or so called 'vamping'.

He goes on to say that this vamping technique (steady left hand chord rhythm) and the ability to improvise was an important skill in accompanying silent films where the vast majority of solo cinema pianists were women. This technique readily translated to theatre pit work and dance bands - another niche for female musicians.

Emily O'Reilly was an example of this style of musician. She was able to adapt to the changing forms of entertainment in the twentieth century, including silent films, dance bands, vaudeville and popular theatre. As a single woman she supported herself for over 60 years as a musician. She was a life member of the W A Musicians Union. Up until 1990, Emily kept control of her own dance band and was still playing in public two months before she died in July, 1994, aged 92.

* Mark Turton is a freelance musician and dance accompanist. He recently received a grant under the WA Trades and Labor Council's artist-in-residence program to pursue research on Emily O'Reilly.

Opens with “Waltz Parisienne”.

Emily: That was “Waltz Parisienne”. It was actually through sight reading that piece of music for a very wonderful pianist in Perth just after the First World War, that I got my first professional job. I came to Perth and had an interview with that pianist, and he gave me that piece of music to sight read. I think I was about 14 or 15. He told my mother that I’d have no problems, go back to the country, pack up and come to Perth and he’d see that I got work, which I did.

The first job I got when I came to Perth was playing for the silent pictures at Midland Junction, three nights a week. I did that for a couple of years and then from there I played for a dancing teacher in Perth whose name was Ethel Philip. She taught all types of dancing. So I was with her, for a couple of years, playing for tap and classical ballet classes. And for two nights a week, she used to run a public dance teaching ballroom dancing. So that particular piece of music was really how I started playing in Perth.

Mark: What happened after you played for the dance schools?

Emily: Well, it was while I was doing a rehearsal for one of the big dancing schools in Perth at the Tivoli Theatre or what was called then the Luxor, that a Mr. Bruce Carroll came over from Melbourne to open up a vaudeville show here in a much bigger way than previously. After going around town listening to various bands and pianists, he came to the Luxor for a rehearsal I was doing for a dancing teacher and her annual concert, and he seemed to feel that I would be quite capable of doing what he wanted me to do. So I was interviewed by him and a decision was made, and I started rehearsing for the first show at the Tivoli Theatre. He called it the Tivoli after one of the big theatres in Melbourne.

Mark: Did you play for a lot of different artists?

Emily: Oh - all overseas artists practically, Eastern States and overseas. We had fortnightly changes there and absolutely packed the place out every fortnight. Then out of the blue there was a lady called Gladys Moncrieff. She was called Australia’s Queen of Song. She was a wonderful woman, a lovely woman and she had a most fantastic soprano voice. She came to the Tivoli and the show had such big audiences that they decided to transfer it to the Capitol in William St, down where the old Embassy was. They transferred the whole show down there. She decided on the first rehearsal that she didn’t want the orchestra to play, and she asked if I would go up on stage and do her accompaniment for her, which I did. One of her greatest numbers was (music starts):



Em Reilly with one of her dance bands in the early 1920s.

“My Hero” verse and chorus (lyrical, full sounding waltz).

Emily: That was from the “Chocolate Soldier”. That was one of her most popular songs. After that her season finished at the Capitol Theatre, the whole of that show was transferred to South Australia, to Adelaide, and it was run in the Majestic Theatre there. And of course, Gladys came over with that show and again she asked me to go up on stage and be her accompanist which was a great thrill to me I can assure you, because she was such a well known artist in Australia. After finishing the season in Adelaide at that time, we did the Christmas pantomime there, “Cinderella”. Then we came back to Perth and I think we were here for another twelve months after that, and another artist came over from the Eastern States named Nellie Kolle. She was a male impersonator - an excellent artist. This was her favourite theme song:

“Fill ‘Em Up” (rhythmic style with a full sound and strong left hand vamp).

Emily: That song was the highlight of her act. She used to act the part of a drunk, and the number goes “Fill ‘em up, Fill em up - It is my birthday”. It was a marvellous song and she acted it so well. That season finished and it was then I was asked by Edgley and Dawe (“Mick” Edgley who was Michael Edgley’s father) if I would join their company in Adelaide, which I did. I was there for twelve months in Adelaide with them at the Majestic Theatre putting on various shows, and some beautiful shows too.

Incidentally, I was their musical directress too and they brought a very big show over from America. It was all American artist - there were no Australians. I think the only Australians in it were the ballet and the show girls. All the rest were and well known artists from America. That show was called “The Great White Way”. After a season in Adelaide, that show was taken up to Brisbane, Queensland and myself and the drummer were the only two musicians from the orchestra who were taken up there, the rest of the orchestra were picked up in Brisbane. We were there for approximately six weeks in Brisbane. It was really a fantastic show to work for and wonderful artists to work for - all nice people.

After finishing the show in Brisbane, the whole show disbanded and I came back to Perth again, and I no sooner got back that I got a telegram from Eric Edgley (“Mick” Edgley) to catch the next plane back to Tasmania. They’d taken over the Theatre Royal in Hobart, and the pianist they had there could only stay for five weeks. He had to go back to his job in the Tivoli in Melbourne - so Mick wired for me to come over for five weeks. Well, I wasn’t doing anything, so I practically caught the next plane back, I didn’t stop to unpack really. At the end of five weeks that pianist said

he wouldn't be coming back to Tasmania, that his job was secure in the Melbourne Tivoli. So Mick asked me if I'd stay on - which I did.

It was then that I wrote to my Mum and told her to put our little car on the boat and come over to Tasmania as I was there for twelve months for that show. We used to do a month's show in Hobart and then take it through Launceston and do a fortnight in Launceston and then come back. It was a lovely little theatre, very old and quaint, and a good place to work in. When I finished the shows after that twelve months in Tasmania Mick said that he would be taking a big touring show through New Zealand, and would I come as musical directress for that - which I did. I came back home and repacked my cases and everything and once more said "Ta Ta" to Mum. She was getting very sick of it by now with me arriving home and flying off on the next plane.

Anyhow, I went back and picked this show up in Sydney, did a couple of rehearsals in Sydney and then went to Auckland with the cast and a drummer. When we got to Auckland we picked up the complement of the band there. I think we had about eight or nine in that orchestra. That show toured right through New Zealand. We did both islands, Auckland and Wellington, and we were six months on that tour doing all the small provinces right through New Zealand - finishing up in Invercargill, I think it was. It was really a fantastic tour. Then I came back to Melbourne again.

Mark: Could you talk about some of the outstanding people you worked with and maybe some of the music you played for them?

Emily: Well, two or three names come to mind. At the Plaza Theatre in Northcote in Melbourne there were two people on radio that were terrifically popular - Graham Kennedy and Nicky. Nicky was his partner, Graham was the senior member of the two of them. They used to put on a wonderful breakfast show and were one of the most popular acts in Melbourne. All the mothers - oh, they used to clamour over them! Well, they decided to put Nicky and Graham on stage at the Plaza and get them to act the fool - like they did over radio. That was actually marvellous, it was a riot. You couldn't get near the stage door at night time, when the show was over, for all the dear old Mums in Melbourne clamouring around to see Nicky and Graham. I also I worked with George Wallace Senior. I did a couple of touring shows with them. A few years later on after that I worked with his son - young George.

Mark: He did a lot of comedy, didn't he?

Emily: Yes. Stand up comedy. He used to do wonderful what they call "prat falls". He would slither from one side of the stage to the other on the side of his face. He was known for that sort of thing, a terrific comedian and a wonderful person to work with as well.

Another act that I worked with, not here in Perth, but after I joined up with Edgley and Dawe, was Ivor Morton and Dave Kaye, the duo pianists, who were very well known those days. One of their favourite numbers on stage was:

"Somebody Stole My Gal" (played with much vigour and a strong bass line).

Emily: "Somebody Stole my Gal"... - they were really a very, very nice act to work with.

Mark: You were still musical director and you had to be spot on for them.

Emily Absolutely yes. Their act was quite hard to pick up. There was one particular number. We had to be right on the ball and right on the very note that they struck on the piano - we had to pick it up in the pit, which was pretty hard to do. And in those days when I was in the Tivoli in Perth and again in Tasmania I only had four or five piece bands. I didn't have big orchestras, and Edgley and Dawe used to get all of the big acts. They used to get the complete Tivoli show from Melbourne brought over to Tasmania while I was there. Now in Melbourne there was a 15 or 20 piece orchestra. All the music was manuscripted and when those acts come to Tasmania and they looked down in the pit and there'd only be five of us there. . . All these big scores of music and everything was in manuscript. I can tell you it was a real problem to fit the things in because the scores were written for big orchestras and it was very very hard at times to sort out enough melody. The band used to consist of the piano, the drums, a violin and trumpet. Four piece as a rule. Never having a bass violin, my left hand developed to such an extent that it was as good as any bass violin because I had such force in it.

Mark: You can hear that coming through.

Emily: (*emphatically*) I had to. I could not be weak in the left hand. I had to build up the band out of a four or five piece bands with my left hand - I'm glad now that it happened like that.

Mark: Did you have any trouble being a musical director - especially being a woman in the pit?

Emily: Well on the whole, not really, although there were times when different ones aggravated me terribly. I had one trumpet player in Tasmania. His name was Alf Vileto. He was a good trumpet player but he used to really irritate me, if he could play a few wrong notes in somebody's number, that's the sort of thing he would do. And one night while we were at the Theatre Royal in Hobart he irritated me so much in the first half of the show that I was ready to pummel into him during the interval in the band room. But I think I'd got such a lot of authority; you know, I was pretty strong with them. I had to be because some of them would really try and put it over me. . .
(pause)

Another theatrical company that I worked and toured with, I was with them for about three years, was Max Reddy and Stella Lamond. That's Toni Lamond's mother and stepfather. And Helen Reddy was Toni's half sister. We travelled through Tasmania although we never actually played in Hobart or Launceston. We'd do what they called the "smalls" in Tasmania and put down our roots in a little town called Ulverston and from there we travelled to all the various small parts of Tasmania such as Smithton and Queenstown. When we went to Queenstown, a mining town, we'd get there on a Saturday morning, quit the show on Saturday night, do two shows on the Sunday and then leave there again on the Monday and come back to Ulverston. We used to do all these smalls and that tour would last approximately six months. We would then come back to Melbourne and they'd get a fresh lot of artists, a new show, and then in the second half of the year we'd do the thing again.

Mark: What were they like as artists - those two?

Emily: Very good.

Mark: Singing and dancing?

Emily: Yes. Max was a comedian, definitely, and Stella was what they called his feed. The comedian always had to have the feed to feed the business over to him.

After finishing working with Max Reddy and Stella Lamond with those two tours twice a year right up as far as Cairns, I had word from Will Mahoney who asked me if I would be his pianist. He wanted to open three musical comedies in Brisbane in the Cremore Theatre. The condition was

that he would foot the bill for the three musical comedies, if he had the lead in one of them. Now one of the musical comedies was called "Sunny" and the lead in that was well known all over Australia, a girl named Gloria Dawn. She was a wonderful soubrette, a beautiful looking girl. Then there was another soubrette, who took the lead in "Mercenary Mary". Then Bill Mahoney, who was Evie Hayes' husband, footed the bill for these three musical comedies and the one that he wanted to take the lead in was "Little Nellie Kelly".

Musical excerpt of waltz from "Little Nellie Kelly".

Bill took the lead in that as the Irish policeman. And he did a very good job of it too. He was a very clever person, Bill, because when we had him in the Tivoli Theatre in Perth his act was all comedy and he had a xylophone made. I think it was six to seven feet long, and Bill used to tie four hammers, two hammers on each ankle, jump up on his xylophone and dance up and down it playing all sorts of tunes, popular tunes. He was an exceptionally popular artist.

A well known name right throughout the theatrical business, (he was on one of the soap operas that was in the Eastern States, "No. 96") was a fellow named Ronnie Shand. And Ron, not so very long ago came on one of the shows here, "The Mike Walsh Show", and he did his routine of tapdancing to tunes such as this:

Medley of various tunes, including "Narcissus", "Inch Worm" and "Country Gardens".

Emily: After all that, and after being on the road, in and out of theatres, working with different companies and one thing and another, I felt that I'd finally had it. I was on the road for approximately ten to twelve years and I just felt that I'd had touring, living in and out of suitcases, third rate hotels and all the rest of it. It got pretty monotonous - so I packed my bags and came back to Perth. I wasn't in Perth very long when "My Fair Lady" came through. The secretary of the Union rang me one day and he said there's a big show coming, would you like to be in it playing piano with the orchestra and I said "Ooh yes, I would love to do that", so he said "All right" and he put my name down. Well, at that time I was playing approximately four to five nights a week doing old time dances, so I did the musical after a lot of persuasion from different ones in the orchestra.

Up till then I hadn't actually worked with a big band, not to the extent of the number that would be in that orchestra, and I was pretty shaky about doing it. Anyhow on the Tuesday morning I had to go into the theatre and do the first rehearsal with the conductor that they brought over. I just can't

think of his name. Well, we got as far as the end of the first act and he said “I can’t go on with the second half of the show because I’ve got an appointment in town”. Then he said “You’ll be in tonight to do the show?” And away he went. Well, that was a terrible blow to me because I hadn’t even seen the music for the second half. Anyhow, I took the bull by the horns as they say, and I came in and did the show. I was just about a nervous wreck by the time it finished. But, the rest of the band seemed to think it was okay so I carried on with it. The show lasted for 18 weeks and we did eight shows a week sometimes, but always six shows a week, two shows on a Saturday, and sometimes two on a Friday. Well, that was lovely - I really got used to that and thoroughly enjoyed it.

The next show that came in was the First Moscow Circus. That was under canvas down at the Esplanade and again I did the piano work. The conductor of that show couldn’t speak a word of English. He was Russian - so we had an interpreter.

The next show I did, I was rehearsal pianist for the “Merry Widow”. That was down in the Capitol Theatre, as was the next show I played for, “The King and I”. The conductor for that was Isador Goodman, the world famous pianist. It was quite a thrill working with him. Then after that, the next show and the last one that I actually did here was George Mitchell’s “The Black and White Minstrels”, that came out from England. And I think, of all the shows I played for that was the one that I enjoyed the most. It was a really fantastic show. Beautiful big orchestra. I think 25 in the band and it was a great thrill. I thoroughly enjoyed that.

Well, after all that I feel that my life has gone a full circle. I’ve played for all types of dancing, theatrical work - everything that anybody can mention. And now here I am back again - where I started. Playing for Old Time Dances, still enjoying them and I think not doing too bad, seeing as this year I’ll be 82 years of age - still quite active - playing at the Mount Lawley College and enjoying every minute of that too. Working with fantastic people. Lovely teachers and musicians.

Signing off... Em Reilly! (*laughs*).

¹ Whiteoak, J. (1995) “Australian Women in Performance Time Composing 1880-1975” in Radic T (ed) *Repercussions: Composing Women’s Festival Conference Papers*: Monash University, July 1994, pp.21-24



Em Reilly plays the accompaniment for a revival of the silent film “The Sentimental Bloke” at a Perth cinema in the early 1980s.

(Photograph courtesy of “The West Australian”)

The First Ten Years of the Kindergarten Teachers' Association of Western Australia: 1962-1972

Linley Batterham*

Kindergartens like bathrooms are necessary in this modern society¹

Early childhood education in Western Australia began in 1911. A group of Perth people whose concern was for the educational and physical well-being of working class and disadvantaged children organised the Kindergarten Union of Western Australia.² The Kindergarten Union aimed to provide the opportunity for young children to reach their potential as worthwhile citizens through its kindergartens.

Properly trained teachers were essential to achieve these aims. The teachers were daughters of the upper middle class of Perth society because kindergarten teaching was charity work and considered excellent training for motherhood. The cost of training and financial support beyond the minimal wages paid, also restricted those who trained³ A kindergarten teacher, Helen Briggs, recalled:

People had to pay to train. Then we were bonded for three years after that. It meant only the people who could pay could come in, so I suppose it gave you a feeling of being a select group of people.⁴

In World War Two, many women left their homes to join the workforce. For most this experience in the public sphere gave them a new identity and broadened their horizons. Once the war was over they returned to their homes with a renewed sense of purpose and stronger family and community commitment. The “elite” women who spearheaded the formation of the kindergartens refocussed their attention on the needs of their own children.⁵ Pat O'Sullivan, a kindergarten teacher, explained:

The Kindergarten movement was amovement for the poor children. But when the middle class [and the society women] began to see the advantages that the poor children were getting from kindergartens, they wanted it too. they wanted it too.⁶

Other parents involved themselves in local community activities including pre-school education and health. They lobbied for building loans, they raised funds for equipment and they organised and helped maintain their own kindergartens⁷. Registration and affiliation of kindergartens⁸ and the training and provision of the teachers remained the province of the

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Kindergarten Union. Teachers' salaries were partly met by the Kindergarten Union and partly by the weekly levies paid by the parents. Note that this so-called 'Union' was in fact an employer body and at this stage its employees had no collective representation.

Prosperity accompanied the economic development in the State in the 1950s. Suburbia spread, placing pressures on both the governments of the day and charity groups to provide more facilities and amenities. The Kindergarten Union struggled to maintain the supply of teachers for each new kindergarten. Extensive recruitment drives included not only locally trained primary teachers, but also women trained in the Eastern States and appropriately trained migrant women. The Kindergarten Union also took the unprecedented step of re-employing married women as part-time teachers. Training extended to include new conversion courses for primary trained and European trained women.⁹ But the quality of teaching varied because the autonomy within each kindergarten allowed teachers to freely practise their own methods and ideas. This worried some kindergarten teachers.¹⁰ Others expressed concern at the small number of kindergartens. They realised their skills and expertise provided pre-school education to a very small percentage of the population. By 1963, more than 60% of all children ready for kindergarten were turned away.¹¹ A crisis existed.

The kindergarten teachers themselves were at the centre of this crisis. As the education of girls extended, those young women who chose kindergarten teaching as a profession came from wider socio-economic groups than just the upper middle class.¹² They did not have the same family economic support and needed financial independence. But kindergarten teachers, who trained for longer than other teachers, were paid less. Kindergarten teachers were overworked, underpaid and in short supply. However, until 1962 they seemed insufficiently motivated to improve their position. Their commitment to the philosophy of the kindergarten movement and their still dominant middle class conservatism inhibited them. One writer of the times noted a confusion in their status in society which added to their apathy:

The image of the kindergarten teacher is a rather curious one. She appears to be highly regarded by representatives of other professional groups with whom she is in close contact - namely, the personnel of Infant Health, the Health Education Council, the special services branch of the Education Department and the Education Department itself. The public image of the kindergarten teacher is less reassuring. She often appears to be regarded as a 'child minder' rather than an educationalist, and whilst historically and currently one can pin-point reasons for this, it is difficult to ensure that knowledge of her role in education is understood by the general public.¹³

One woman's influence and determination helped resolve this situation. Joyce Sackville's concern to improve the salary and status of herself and her colleagues culminated in the formation of the Kindergarten Teachers' Association of Western Australia, Industrial Union of Workers, early in 1962.

Joyce Sackville worked for the Spastic Welfare Association at the Sir James Mitchell Centre, teaching children affected by cerebral palsy. She was one of the married women who trained as a kindergarten teacher in the mid-1950s. After three years of training, she returned to the Centre as a more skilled and competent worker. One day, she re-assessed her salary in relation to the long hours and very demanding duties. She decided to confront the accountant and request an increase in salary. He replied, "I'm very sorry but I will not raise your salary....you haven't any award to cover you and I can pay you what I like."¹⁴ His refusal took her by surprise. After voicing her indignation Joyce Sackville said, "Well, I most certainly will see that you get one [an award] forthwith"¹⁵

Having set herself a challenge, Joyce Sackville spent some time organising her thoughts.

I thought to myself, "Now who does the caring for the child? Mostly women. What is the status of women?" . . . Let's look at this. Our society measures the status of the person by the pay that they receive for the work. I thought of doctors, lawyers, teachers... if you're getting a good big salary you must be a person of importance. So that is the platform that I went forward on. I had to raise the status of women [kindergarten teachers] by getting them a salary in measure with the type of work.¹⁶

It was this ideology of equating salary with status that Joyce Sackville presented to her friends and colleagues at the Kindergarten Graduates' Club.¹⁷ Initially, she received a cool reception. The task of persuading the women to commit themselves to forming a union was difficult. Not only were they professionals but also those "who were working with the Kindergarten Union at the time were a bit fearful that they might lose their jobs", she recalled.¹⁸ This was not a problem for Joyce because she worked for a private employer. Eventually she managed to find six women willing to form a committee to consider the issues involved in establishing a union.

The committee, which always met in private homes, agreed to place an advertisement announcing a public meeting in the *West Australian*.¹⁹ The following week, 22 women representing about 30% of Perth's kindergarten teachers met at 1186 Hay Street, West Perth and formed a union. They discussed a constitution and elected all the office bearers, except the president. Joyce Sackville became the Union's first secretary and Lena Meenhorst its first treasurer.²⁰

At the second meeting, the 31 women present elected Jane Innes as President. They also reconsidered the constitution and selected a name. The popular choice of the title “Association” not only denoted the professional status of its members but also provided a distinction from the employer body, the Kindergarten Union. The word “Association” “was a bit of a softener . . . it wouldn't detract from the professional image of the union,” explained Joyce Sackville.²¹

An application to the Arbitration Court (hereafter referred to as the Court) to register their new organisation was challenged by the Independent Schools' Salaried Officers Association which requested an exemption from the Association's constitution for kindergarten teachers in independent schools.²² This exemption was granted. The Kindergarten Teachers' Association of Western Australia, Industrial Union of Workers, received official registration on 22 October 1962.

The primary concern of the newly formed Kindergarten Teachers' Association (hereafter known as the Union) was to improve the salaries and conditions of service through an industrial award. The President, Jane Innes wrote:

We are neither nursemaids nor child minders. We are qualified teachers specialising in the kindergarten field. Our Kindergarten Diploma is accepted by the Education Department as a teaching qualification up to Grade 3. But we are poorly paid. . . Nobody is backing the Kindergarten Union so fees must go up. Only the rich can pay. Teachers accept low salaries to avoid this situation²³

Of equal concern was the escalating cost to parents through fees or levies. The President, in her first Annual Report, summed up the position by stating that only those children whose parents could afford the levies would benefit from the teachers' work. The children who needed a kindergarten education would not have access to one.²⁴ Kindergartens should be for all pre-school aged children.

In 1963, the Union consolidated its position, recruited members and drew up a log of claims. Membership reached over 95% of all the kindergarten teachers by the end of that year. Executive members knew they had strong support when they applied to the Court, in September 1963, for an award to cover all kindergarten teachers in the State.²⁵ But no one expected the ensuing battle.

The dispute over the log of claims was protracted and time-consuming for everyone, particularly the key witnesses who not only ran kindergartens but had family responsibilities as well. The Spastic Welfare Association and the Child Welfare Department both objected to being bound by the proposed award.²⁶ They believed that their staff provided quite different services from other kindergarten teachers. Commissioner D E Cort upheld their objection.

But he acknowledged that a *prima facie* case did exist for an award to cover other kindergarten teachers.²⁷ Six weeks later the Full Bench of the Court unanimously dismissed an appeal presented by the Union against the decision to exempt the Child Welfare Department from the award.²⁸

A second presentation of the log of claims to the Court created an industrial dispute between the Union and the main employer body, the Kindergarten Union. The hearing started in June 1964.²⁹ Disagreement arose over the salary scales and the added margins for skill. The Union used the salaries paid to assistant mistresses in the primary section of independent schools as its guidelines, even though these were far below those of the State School teachers' salaries.³⁰ To validate the Union's claim that kindergarten teachers deserved to be paid a margin over and above the flat rate, witnesses gave evidence of their work, training and the skills required to perform their duties. One witness, Jane Innes, compared the particular skills of a kindergarten teacher with those of a primary teacher. She spoke of the different methods of programming daily activities, the extra duties such as checking equipment and attending meetings, the longer hours at work with larger classes and the longer training which allowed teaching up to Grade 3.³¹ Joyce Sackville also reported her experience of applying for a salary increase. She explained that her employer considered the female basic wage sufficient pay despite her specialist skills and professional training.³²

The use of expert witnesses to tell their stories, combined with the competence of D W Fletcher of the Bakers' Union as their industrial advocate, proved successful. In handing down his decision, Commissioner Cort stated that:

The worker whose child attends a kindergarten is in receipt of a reasonable wage and there is no reason why he (*sic*) should not contribute sufficient amount to enable the teacher to receive a reasonable wage for the work performed.³³

Then he considered the hours of teaching and rates of pay in other States and other teaching positions as well as the witnesses' evidence on the particular skills required for the job. He granted the Teachers' (Kindergarten) Award [22/1963]³⁴ (hereafter known as the Award) but deliberately omitted a "Preference Clause" which would have given union members preference in employment.³⁵ However his insertion of a "Liberty to Apply" clause left the way open for the Union to re-apply for a Preference Clause.³⁶

The granting of the Award allowed the Union Executive to turn its attention to further improving the status of kindergarten teachers. Strategies suggested included the registration of teachers, stricter Education Department controls and a code of uniformity to overcome the variation in teaching standards between kindergartens.³⁷ Then, early in 1965, the President, Jane Innes, convinced the Executive to apply for the inclusion in the Award of a Preference

Clause with a dismissal clause in order for the Union to function satisfactorily and at full strength.³⁸ Another major dispute occurred. Commissioner E R Kelly heard the case. G J Martin, advocate for the employer body, the Kindergarten Union, argued, inter alia, that kindergarten teachers, as professionals, were above unionism. Once again Fletcher, the Union advocate, successfully used his knowledge of industrial law and his advocacy skills by citing other industrial cases to reinforce his claims. Kelly ruled that both the Preference and Dismissal Clauses be included in the Award.

The Preference Clause did not increase the shortage of teachers as predicted. However the increasing demand for new centres and low trainee recruitment did exacerbate the situation. To help cope with the shortage the employer gradually recruited more women as untrained aides on very low salaries. They were mostly married women with children who were glad of jobs which required no formal qualifications and had hours corresponding with school hours.³⁹ But the kindergarten aides became increasingly dissatisfied with their low salaries and poor working conditions. So they sought assistance from the Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union (hereafter known as the FMWU).⁴⁰ Following this request, the FMWU altered its constitution to allow aides to become members.

At this time too, the employer body, Kindergarten Union, changed its name to Kindergarten Association of Western Australia (hereafter referred to as the Kindergarten Association). The President, W D Benson, explained this was “to save confusion in industrial interpretation”.⁴¹ This name change may have offered a better image but it did nothing to assist the guardian and provider of kindergarten education with a formula to solve its ever-increasing financial problem and alleviate the pressure for more kindergartens. By 1968, less than 10% of eligible children attended kindergartens.⁴²

The Kindergarten Association, to relieve its financial situation and cater for more children, increased the length of the afternoon session⁴³ and the number of children in the class. The Union agreed to an experiment for one term only.⁴⁴ Selected teachers increased their hours by half an hour for three afternoons per week and accepted five extra children without a pay. The effects on the children were assessed by the teachers to ensure the maintenance of good standards of education.⁴⁵

The experiment proved successful and extended to all kindergartens. The Union promptly applied to the Court for Award amendments to restrict tuition to five and half hours per day, an hour for lunch, a 20% increase in margins, and a district allowance for those teaching in the North-west of the State. Once again it was the setting of the margins which caused the greatest dispute. The Union applied for similar increases in the margins as those already

received by the female primary teaching staff in independent schools. The Union's advocate, Owen Salmon of the Electrical Trades' Union (later Secretary of the FMWU), argued that the kindergarten teachers' margins should be fixed to the independent schools' rates for future convenience and expediency. Their salary rate would then be comparable with the least qualified teachers outside the Education Department.⁴⁶ The granting of this 40% salary increase⁴⁷ brought kindergarten teachers' salaries closer to parity with female state school teachers.⁴⁸

That same year, 1968, also proved to be significant for the industrial strength of the Union. Membership stood at 100⁴⁹ of the 102⁵⁰ eligible women. Membership support in a postal vote referendum allowed affiliation with the Trades and Labor Council, indicating that members' industrial horizons had widened.⁵¹ The same referendum agreed to extend membership to holders of the National Nursery Education Board of England certificates (hereafter referred to as NNEB).

But amidst these successes one regretful note sounded. Joyce Sackville, the founder and Honorary Life Member, retired due to pressure of work, which had left her little time for administrative duties. She had taken a new post with the Education Department as an advisory teacher for handicapped children. For her enthusiasm and dedication she was presented with a silver engraved bracelet which she still wears.

After Joyce Sackville's retirement, the Union Executive and their new non-teaching secretary, Elsie Waghorn⁵², continued to manage the affairs of the Union effectively. Meanwhile, the Kindergarten Association continued to struggle with the impact of the increased salaries including the aides covered by the Kindergarten Aides' Award.⁵³ The recurring problems of finance, budgets and negotiations with government and teachers prompted P J Carly, the first Executive Officer of the Kindergarten Association, to head a deputation to the State Minister of Education, E Lewis, in November 1968. The requests for an immediate special grant to overcome a budget shortfall and for a new formula for calculation of future grants were acceded to.⁵⁴

Until now education was primarily a State Government responsibility. But in 1968 the Commonwealth Liberal-Country Party Coalition Government fulfilled its election promise by setting up the Commonwealth Department of Education and Science. This allowed for the gradual increase in the Federal Government's involvement in education. Initially, the Federal Minister for Education and Science, Malcolm Fraser, extended the capital works grants to the States.⁵⁵ The increasing politicisation of education at the State and Federal levels had significant repercussions for kindergarten teachers.

Initially, these promises of more Federal aid for education created an expectation of expanded resources for pre-school education for all children, especially those of working mothers. However the opening of 14 new kindergartens in 1969 did little to alleviate the problem as only 5676 children had places.⁵⁶ Long waiting lists existed at most centres. In an attempt to accommodate more children, the class sizes in some kindergartens were increased by 20% in both the morning and afternoon sessions. Two teachers and an aide worked together in these larger classes.⁵⁷

New centres and larger classes required more trained staff. The expansion of the Kindergarten Teachers' College at Meerilinga in Hay Street, West Perth, with Federal Capital Assistance funds, resulted in an increased intake of trainee teachers. But these students took three years to train. The employment of more women holding qualifications gained elsewhere relieved the immediate staff shortages.⁵⁸ By 1970 the Kindergarten Association employed 149 teachers, 11 holders of the NNEB and 106 aides.⁵⁹ The Union Executive's concern over teacher qualifications now intensified as often teachers did not fit the criteria for Union membership and therefore failed to meet the standards set by the Australian Pre-Schools' Association.⁶⁰ In the country the issues of standards and staff shortages were more serious because kindergartens were frequently run by untrained women with qualified teachers visiting only once or twice a week.⁶¹ The Union suggested the provision of suitable living accommodation near the country kindergartens, extending the district allowances and improved salary increments to encourage country women into kindergarten teaching or to return to teaching after an absence.⁶² The Kindergarten Association rejected these ideas.

Instead, Barbara Jones, the Director of Kindergartens, proposed a new training course for assistants based on the NNEB. The object of the Child Care Certificate course was "to train girls and women to a similar standard for employment as assistants in affiliated kindergartens or service in day care centres and other institutions."⁶³ Immediate implementation meant the first intake occurred in February 1971 and included two Aboriginal and several mature-aged women. Many graduates of this new Child Care Certificate course (hereafter referred to as the Triple C) "saw themselves as a category of trained teacher."⁶⁴ Because of this attitude, the three year trained kindergarten teachers viewed the course with suspicion as they feared it would undermine their status. However, once the trained aides or assistants proved their worth the kindergarten teachers accepted them as para-professionals along with the holders of the NNEB certificates. By February 1972, both were included in the Award under the title of Assistants.⁶⁵ The Union had successfully adapted to the changing times.

The changing social attitudes towards the position and value of pre-school education resulted in a change in terminology. *Pre-school* replaced *Kindergarten*. At the 1971 Annual General Meeting, the kindergarten teachers unanimously agreed to register a new title for their Union - the Pre-School Teachers' Association (hereafter referred to as the Union).⁶⁶ This was granted on 20 June 1971.⁶⁷

As the Union deliberated over its new name, the fight for salary parity with other three year trained teachers continued⁶⁸. Realising the under-resourced employer body could not meet their log of claims, the Union modified its first application. Their claim for parity with Junior Primary teachers in the Education Department was amended parity with female, two year trained teachers in independent schools.⁶⁹ They also deferred the commencement date to January 1972.

The Kindergarten Association, as the employer, ignored these generous concessions and proposed a plan to offset the salary increases by extending the number of afternoon contact hours to two and a half per day. The extra hours would attract a higher government subsidy,⁷⁰ thereby meeting the Kindergarten Association's estimated deficit of \$67 000 created by the salary increases.⁷¹

The Union organised a special general meeting to discuss the increased hours of tuition and the conditions attached to the proposal. Union advocate Owen Salmon addressed the meeting. A lengthy discussion followed. Finally, the members accepted all but the last condition titled "Suggested Condition outside the Award". Its wording placed total power in the employer's hands:

The Association [the employer body] to be free from union opposition in arranging cases where staff employed, number of children and environmental conditions allow, to arrange for the opening of the kindergarten on a fourth afternoon in each week after consultation with the teacher or teachers in charge and the Committee (but not subject to the right of veto).⁷²

The members then drew up a compromise motion which allowed for the extension of the contact time to two and half hours for three, not four, afternoons per week.⁷³ The employer disregarded the amendments and threatened to suspend all salary negotiations.⁷⁴ At the second special general union meeting within a fortnight, the members showed the first signs of militancy. They instructed Owen Salmon to convey to the Board of Management of the Kindergarten Association, the unacceptability of its threats and lack of guarantees for the future. They insisted an independent arbitrator be used to resolve the issue.⁷⁵ Writing to members, the Union Secretary advised:

Money was not the only point at issue. . .[It is] the future of pre-school education in WA and the possibility of falling standards. They [the Kindergarten Association] repeatedly inferred that the primary teacher is working full-time and that if kindergarten teachers were hoping for parity they must be prepared for parity 'not only in the pay packet'. They seemed unaware of the much wider range of duties and responsibilities expected of a kindergarten teacher and to be of the opinion that kindergarten teachers have two afternoons off per week.⁷⁶

Surprisingly, despite the year long confrontations and differences of opinion, negotiations kindergarten teachers' salaries rose to parity with two year trained independent schools' female teachers and the hours were not extended.⁷⁷ Salaries now equalled 82.5% of three year trained Education Department teachers' salaries.⁷⁸ The pre-school teachers, satisfied that their Union had done an excellent job in procuring higher wages and maintaining their hours of work, continued working in the first term of the new year.⁷⁹

In early March 1972, however, a directive from the Kindergarten Association caught them by surprise. Teachers must work the extended hours or be dismissed.⁸⁰ The employer implemented the extended hours policy without consultation. The teachers were furious. Non-contact hours were essential for efficient curriculum planning, daily programming and administration of the kindergartens. Any challenge to their professionalism and work practices was viewed with contempt.

The Union Executive perceived that the root cause of the latest policy was once again the deteriorating state of the Kindergarten Association's finances. The secretary wrote to the Minister pointing out that the State Government acknowledged the need for pre-school education through its grant of \$500 000 to the Kindergarten Association but made no direct request for State intervention. But one sentence provided a clue to future developments. "This [pre-school education] already is an integral part of State school system in other States of the Commonwealth where the school age is lower than in WA."⁸¹ There was no reply to this letter but it no doubt influenced politicians' thinking and future policy planning.

At the third special general meeting of that year, convened late March, the teachers voted to "work to rule". They refused to work the extra afternoon, and they resolved to take industrial action in the event of a colleague being victimised by the employer.⁸² For the times, this was an unusually militant action for pre-school teachers and it showed their determination.

A stunned Board of Management of the Kindergarten Association applied for Court intervention. Commissioner Kelly presided over a compulsory conference in April. The Kindergarten Association's advocate, G A Black, based his case on two points - the necessity for extra contact or teaching hours in order to raise the level of government funding, and the assumption that the Union had agreed to the extended hours even though the Award itself had

not been amended.⁸³ The Union's advocate, Owen Salmon, argued, "We are seeking parity in terms of wages but the Association [Kindergarten Association] said we should accept parity in terms of hours".⁸⁴ He argued further that longer hours did not mean better education.

After deliberating over the evidence, Kelly summarised the issues as revolving around professionalism and unionism. "Conflict arose where professional bodies are also industrial bodies," Kelly stated.⁸⁵ Kelly queried the right of the Kindergarten Association, an employer of professionals, to instruct its employees to work more hours,⁸⁶ adding that in both instances negotiation seemed more appropriate. Kelly went on to criticise the Union for not showing full concern for its members because a union's role, first and foremost, was to improve employment conditions for its members. Even though they were professional people they should not be concerned with the employer's financial position.⁸⁷ The Commissioner concluded that the real question of teachers' working the extra hours needed resolving. Kelly ordered the removal of the negotiable phrase "maximum of five and half hours" in Clause 8 of the Award in the interest of clarity.⁸⁸

Negotiations between the two parties continued in an attempt to follow the Court's instructions. Finally the employers conceded to the professional expertise of the teachers, giving them the right, in consultation with their parent committees, to decide whether the extra half hour was appropriate for the children in their individual centres. The issue of the extra half day remained unresolved.⁸⁹ The militancy of the women thwarted the plan to incorporate Friday afternoons into the teaching contact time.

The Union now recognised its political power. Once it had informed the Minister of the relation between the Kindergarten Association's financial problems and the industrial strife over wages and increased hours and had taken a militant stand, then the members recognised their industrial strength. Indeed, the Association itself recognised, at least unofficially, that the Union had an important role to play. Lena Meenhorst recalls:

The Kindergarten Association was always very supportive of the Kindergarten Teachers' Union. It was very difficult for the Kindergarten Union [Kindergarten Association] to have their grants to pay teachers increased and the people I talked to in the Kindergarten Association indicated that by having an official recognition of teachers, by having an industrial award, by having the Arbitration Court decide what teachers should be paid this would strengthen the case of the Kindergarten Association's demand for larger grants to pay teachers' salaries and so they were really behind us all the way and supported us in every way they could⁹⁰.

In addition, a new body, the Parents' Action Group, formed in April 1972 as a community pressure group. Its strength, together with the Union's letters to various members of Parliament and the Kindergarten Association's deputation to the Minister, influenced the

State Government to hold an inquiry into pre-schools. However, the overriding influence for an inquiry was the changes in Federal Party policies for the financing of pre-schools. The Inquiry into Pre-School Education in Western Australia was headed by Stipendiary Magistrate and Chairman of the Government Schools Teachers' Tribunal, W E Nott.⁹¹ The terms of reference reflected the key areas of concern as expressed by all parties and included the administration of the Kindergarten Association, teachers' working conditions and salary structure, the role of the Kindergarten Training College and the formula for government subsidies. The hearings started in June 1972 and lasted until August of the same year.

Union members were pleased with several of the Report's recommendations, which were clearly based on the Union's submission which was presented by Owen Salmon and one of the members.⁹² These included:

That no change be made in the present method of negotiating and determining working conditions and salaries for kindergarten teachers and aides.
and
Subject to the provision of Commonwealth Government funds, the acceptance by the State Government of the total responsibility for subsidising pre-school education in the areas of teacher training, salaries and wages of kindergarten staff, advisory teachers, college staff and administrative and clerical staff.⁹³

At last the women had recognition of their value as teachers and their true worth as fully qualified three year trained teachers. The fulfilment of every kindergarten teacher's wish - salary parity with State School teachers - seemed achievable. The Union Executive called for the immediate implementation of a policy which would see the State Government pay all pre-school teachers' salaries, grant salary parity with State School teachers over 1974 and 1975 and extend student allowances to Kindergarten Teachers' College students.⁹⁴ The Union had realised its crucial role in the politicisation of education. Its members, all women, discarded the stereotyped image of the "professional" when they took the progressive steps of unity and militancy against the unfair practices of their employer.

However pre-school teachers' pleasure in the Report's recognition of the work of their Union and of the need for improved salaries was almost overshadowed by other recommendations. Although the report recommended the continuation of the Kindergarten Association as the principal agency for "the administration of Pre-School Education in this State," it advocated a major change in composition, namely "that the present Board of Management of the Association [Kindergarten Association] be replaced by a Statutory Board consisting of 12 Members".⁹⁵ The implication of this recommendation seemed minimal on paper, but pre-school teachers and the Union Executive believed this clause represented the initial moves towards a changing power base in the pre-school education field. This view was to be vindicated as the future unfolded.

The next ten years saw the Union continuing to maintain a vigilant watch over workplace conditions, and changes to the administration of the pre-schol education system. The Union itself adopted its strategies and tactics to its changing environment in the second decade of its existence, culminating in amalgamation with the FMWU in July, 1982. Over the full period of the Union's history its members maintained their professional identity, and indeed enhanced it, whilst highly unionised. They successfully overcame the restraints of professionalism, conservatism and gender stereotyping, and in doing so ensured the future for their profession and its paraprofessional assistants.

¹ Secretary of the Kindergarten Union, in *Daily News* 6 August 1955

² R Kerr, *A History of the Kindergarten Union*, Perth, 1994, p 31.

³ Interview with Miss M Evans, Perth, 19 September 1994.

⁴ Helen Briggs, Oral History Transcript, p 1, Meerilinga Archives.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Pat O'Sullivan Oral History Transcript, p 10, Meerilinga Archives.

⁷ Particularly strong parent committees existed in Fremantle, Bayswater and Mt. Hawthorn.

Interview with Miss M Evans, 19 September 1994.

⁸ 'Kindergarten' means a school for children under 6 years of age conducted on the theory that education should be begun by gratifying and cultivating the normal aptitude for exercise, play, observation, imitation and construction. Section 2, Education Amendment Act 1943, *Statutes of Western Australia*, Vol VI, 1943.

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ Mrs Pomykaj, a kindergarten teacher, mentioned in a conversation with the author that there was a real concern over the lack of uniformity of standards, Perth, 6 September 1994.

¹¹ *Sunday Times*, 15 December 1963.

¹² Interview with Miss M Evans, 19 September 1994.

¹³ 'Accent on Youth: Pre-School' in *West Australian Parent and Citizen*, July 1971, p 10.

¹⁴ Joyce Sackville, Oral History Transcript, p 2.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ 'The Kindergarten Graduates' Club offered an opportunity for teachers to meet socially to overcome their feelings of isolation in the community.' Joyce Sackville, Oral History Transcript, p 2.

¹⁸ Joyce Sackville Oral History Transcript, p 3.

¹⁹ *West Australian*, 14 March 1962.

²⁰ Minutes, 22 March 1962.

²¹ Joyce Sackville, Oral History Transcript, p 5.

²² Letter to the Arbitration Court from Secretary of Independent Schools' Salaried Officers' Association, 28 September 1962, Union Correspondence file 26, FMWU.

²³ Letter from J Innes to the editor *West Australian*, 10 September 1962.

²⁴ Union Annual General Meeting, 28 March 1963.

²⁵ Register of Industrial Disputes, IAC, AN 195/8 Acc 1489/45. 1954-1967, SAWA.

²⁶ *West Australian Industrial Gazette*, Vol 44, 1964, pp 66-67.

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ *ibid.*, pp 105-107.

²⁹ Register of Industrial Disputes, IAC, AN 195/8 Acc 1489/45, 1954-1967, SAWA.

³⁰ WAIG, Vol 44, 1964, p 472.

³¹ Disputes, Transcript pp 17-24, IAC, AN 195/31 Acc 2801/22, 1963, Box 11, SAWA.

³² *ibid.*

³³ WAIG, Vol 44, 1964, p 471-475.

³⁴ *ibid.*

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- ³⁵ibid, p 472.
- ³⁶ibid, p 475.
- ³⁷Executive Minutes, 16 July 1964.
- ³⁸Presidents' Report, Union Annual General Meeting, 23 March 1965
- ³⁹By mid 1966 there were 68 Diploma teachers and 20 teachers with other qualifications and 70 aides. *Annual Report*, Kindergarten Union, 1965-1966.
- ⁴⁰Letter to Secretary FMWU from general meeting of aides, 8 February 1966, Kindergarten Aides' Award file 1, FMWU.
- ⁴¹President's Report, Annual General Meeting of Kindergarten Association, 1966-1967.
- ⁴²Submission for Pre-School Education Inquiry in Western Australia by Kindergarten Association, 1972, p 15, Meerilinga Archives.
- ⁴³The Award stated not more than 5 1/4 hours of instruction per day.
- ⁴⁴Circular sent to all Union members, 1 February 1972, Kindergarten Teachers' Award file 1, FMWU.
- ⁴⁵ibid.
- ⁴⁶Application and Disputes, Transcript, p 2, IAC, AN 195/12, ACC 1572/119, 1968, SAWA.
- ⁴⁷Application and Disputes, Transcript, IAC, AN 195/12, ACC 1572/119, 1968, SAWA.
- ⁴⁸"Prior to 1971 women teachers received less than their male colleagues who were on the same classification or holding equivalent promotional positions" in "Nennie Harken - The Equal Pay Story", State School Teachers Union of W A. *W A. Teachers Journal* Vol 69, No. 3, pages 44-45, November 27, 1979
- ⁴⁹WAIG, Vol 48, 1968.
- ⁵⁰*Annual Report*, Kindergarten Association, 1967-1968.
- ⁵¹Minutes, 6 April 1968.
- ⁵²Union Annual General Meeting, 15 March 1967.
- ⁵³WAIG, Vol 49, 1969, p 45.
- ⁵⁴*Annual Report*, Kindergarten Association, 1969-1970.
- ⁵⁵ibid.
- ⁵⁶This brought the number of affiliated kindergartens to a record 106, *Annual Report*, Kindergarten Association, 1968-1969.
- ⁵⁷ibid.
- ⁵⁸*Annual Report*, Kindergarten Association, 1969-1970.
- ⁵⁹*Annual Report*, Kindergarten Association, 1969-1970.
- ⁶⁰'Australian Pre-Schools' Association was formed in 1934 as a focus for State organisations concerned with the vitally important first years of a child's life and development.' *Being and Becoming*, Report of 16th National Triennial Conference of Australian Early Childhood Association 1982, p i.
- ⁶¹ibid.
- ⁶²Union Minutes, 24 August 1970.
- ⁶³ibid.
- ⁶⁴Dr D Mossenson, Oral History Transcript, p 14, Meerilinga Archives.
- ⁶⁵WAIG, Vol 52, 1972, p 141.
- ⁶⁶Union Annual General Meeting, 1971.
- ⁶⁷WAIG, Vol 51, 1971.
- ⁶⁸Full equal pay for female state school teachers was achieved on 1 January 1971 (State School Teachers Union of W A (1979) Op. cit, page 45.
- ⁶⁹Letter to members of the Union from Union Secretary E Waghorn, 1 Feb 1972, Kindergarten Teacher's Award file 1, FMWU.
- ⁷⁰State Government grants were calculated on the basis of the number of contact hours per child.
- ⁷¹GA Black, Compulsory Conference between Kindergarten Association and Union, Transcript, p 3, AN 195/24, Acc 2669/369, 1972, SAWA.
- ⁷²Letter to members of the Union from Union Secretary E Waghorn, 1 February 1972, Kindergarten Teachers' Award file 1, FMWU.
- ⁷³Passed 32 votes to 4, Minutes, 11 November 1971.
- ⁷⁴Letter to members of the Union from Union Secretary E Waghorn, 1 February 1972, Kindergarten Teachers' Award file 1, FMWU.
- ⁷⁵Minutes, 9 December 1971.
- ⁷⁶Letter to members of the Union from Union Secretary E Waghorn, 1 February 1972, Kindergarten Teachers' Award file 1, FMWU.
- ⁷⁷O Salmon, Compulsory Conference, Transcript, p 3, AN 195/24, Acc 2669/369, 1972, SAWA.

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- ⁷⁸Letter to Minister of Education, TD Evans from Union Secretary E Waghorn 28 March 1972 Union Correspondence file 6 FMWU.
- ⁷⁹The Award was handed down on 25 February 1972. *WAIG*, Vol 52, 1972 p 141.
- ⁸⁰GA Black, Compulsory Conference, Transcript, p 1, AN 195/24, Acc 2669/369, 1972, SAWA.
- ⁸¹Letter to Minister for Education TD Evans from Union Secretary E Waghorn, 28 March 1972, Union Correspondence file 6, FMWU.
- ⁸²Minutes, 29 March 1972.
- ⁸³GA Black, Compulsory Conference, Transcript, p 2, AN 195/24, Acc 2669/369, 1972, SAWA
- ⁸⁴Leena Meenhorst, Oral History Transcript pp 10-11.
- ⁸⁵Commissioner Kelly, Compulsory Conference, Transcript, p 8, AN 195/24, Acc 2669/369, 1972, SAWA.
- ⁸⁶*ibid*, p 7.
- ⁸⁷*ibid*, p 9.
- ⁸⁸*ibid*, p 7.
- ⁸⁹Letter to Union Secretary E Waghorn from Mr Stapleton Executive Officer of KAWA, 3 October 1972, Union Correspondence file 11, FMWU.
- ⁹⁰Leena Meenhorst, Oral History, Transcript 0-11
- ⁹¹Letter, to Union Secretary E Waghorn from Minister of Education TD Evans, 19 May 1972, Union Correspondence file 6, FMWU.
- ⁹²WE Nott, *Report into Pre-School Education in Western Australia*, Perth, 1972, p 45.
- ⁹³*ibid*, pp 42-43.
- ⁹⁴Letter to Minister for Education TD Evans from Secretary E Waghorn, 19 November 1972, Union Correspondence file 6, FMWU.
- ⁹⁵*ibid*, p 41.

A Woman in the Pilbara: Interview with Julie Tracy

Janis Bailey and Julie Tracy*

Julie Tracy worked in the Pilbara for the iron ore mining company Cliffs Robe River from 1979 to 1987, first as a cleaner, then as a gardener, then on “blast crew” at the mine site.

There is very little Australian research on women in “non-traditional” jobs. Collecting stories such as this is a starting point. Julie herself is currently engaged in “telling the stories” of others in the iron ore industry, via her research, which she mentions at the end of the interview.

Janis: When did you go to the Pilbara and why did you go there?

Julie: I went up there in about mid-1979. I was really going around Australia, working around Australia, but I kind of got stuck in the Pilbara.

Janis: Why did you get stuck there?

Julie: Oh, I started working there and I just stayed. That tended to happen to people, they either stayed a very short period or they stayed a fair while.

Janis: Was your first job there in the iron ore industry?

Julie: No, I actually started working in the Victoria Hotel in Roebourne as a barmaid for a few months and then I went to Pannawonica.

Janis: What was your first job at Pannawonica?

Julie: My first job at Pannawonica . . . Well, why I went to Pannawonica was my boyfriend followed me up to the Pilbara and that's how I'd actually got stuck there. I told him if he was coming up to the Pilbara then he had better try and get a job with one of the iron ore companies from Perth. He got a job in Pannawonica with Cliffs Robe River. Pannawonica was a “closed” town so he was there, and I went there shortly after he came. As a woman you couldn't get employment in that town unless you had married accommodation so I couldn't get any type of employment except in the shop or bar work. So I did bar work. As soon as married accommodation came up I could then put my name down for a cleaning job with the

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company, which I did. Cleaning jobs were offered to women in married accommodation on the basis of when you had put your name on the waiting list for a job in that area. So shortly after I was in a house, about nine months later, I had a company job. I stayed at that for about a year. The cleaning jobs were organised around child-care and things like that. If I remember correctly the hours were mainly 7 in the morning until about 11.30. You could go home and take your children to school in the mornings. Most of this work was part time, there were very few opportunities for full time work in this area. When I worked there cleaners could not transfer out to the production jobs. As I did not want to stay in this work I quit and went to Perth and applied for a full time job. Shortly after that I got a job and I started on production.

Janis: Why couldn't you automatically transfer from the cleaning job to a production job?

Julie: Essentially, it was because the AWU had a motion on their books in Pannawonica that the cleaners could not transfer out to production jobs.

Janis: Why was that motion on the books?

Julie: My understanding was that the AWU as a whole had a policy then that married women should not be in full-time employment. That was part of it. The other part was that it related to relationships between men and women and perspectives of what women should and shouldn't do. Views that are still commonly held.

Janis: What happened? Was that practice eventually stopped?

The motion that prevented cleaners transferring to other departments got removed from the books while I was in town. A New Zealand woman who had first lived in town in the late 1970s and who had worked as a cleaner returned to the town in the 1980s. She pursued the matter under EEO and was supported by a very good steward in the cleaning department. As the steward told me, the AWU convenor at the time had shown her a telegram or fax stating that the AWU had a policy that married women should not be in full time employment. As I recall, the steward sent the document down to the Equal Opportunity Commission in Perth. Anyway, as a result of the proof the motion had to be taken of the books and cleaners be allowed to transfer. The union meeting where the motion was removed was quite hostile to the idea.

The implication of cleaners not being able to transfer was much greater than limited employment opportunities. There is the question of financial loss upon termination when trying to get a full time job as a wages employee. Seniority pay could be quite substantial, superannuation funds had to be removed from a very successful company based scheme in the 1980s, and seniority

for good jobs was lost. Apart from everything else the men would not have liked to have women in competition with them for transfers. Some of these women had more than a decade's service: this meant if they wanted, they could transfer into jobs on production that the men found very attractive because of good conditions and higher pay rates. The change allowed those women who wanted to transfer, to do so.

Janis: Were most women united in believing that the motion should come off the books? Was it a kind of a gender clash or was it something different from that?

Julie: I'm trying to recall. I wasn't in the cleaning department and hadn't been for a while. My recollections of the meeting was that the AWU convenor had a commitment at that stage to getting the motion taken off the books. It did have the feel of a gender clash. As an AWU member, I thought that the AWU on site and its male membership had a patriarchal relationship with the cleaners and women in general. For example, at one stage the AWU membership, who were mostly single men, wanted the cleaners to be made an essential service so that when the men were on strike their rooms and beds could be kept tidy.

At general meetings of the AWU, women did attend but they did not speak much. Women could be shouted down. However, in my opinion the exclusion functioned at a different level. The membership did not rank the cleaning women's working issues as important except in the last example I cited on making them an essential service and when forced to legally as with the transfers. The cleaners did have ongoing contact with union reps. From my period in that department I have the impression that at times the reps were unresponsive for whatever reason. The men might not have perceived themselves as being like that of course. And of course, individual men mayn't have been like that. Also many of the women found the conditions in the cleaning department satisfactory, so they did not want to transfer out. Then there was a group of women obviously who did want to do production work. If your husband was a steward you were really quite limited as it was unlikely the company would employ you in office work.

Janis: Did you come into contact with AWU policy on other issues?

Julie: Firstly, it is very hard to separate the union attitudes from the attitudes of the men and many women in the town in general. On a day-to-day basis, for example, as a cleaner you were faced with the union motion not the company's actions. However, while I was there the company never really employed many single women, or married women who were not working as cleaners on production. In terms of unions it wasn't just the AWU. It was very difficult for women to get voted into the other unions. I don't recall the metalworkers employing that many women in the eight years I was in Pannawonica - maybe one. At one stage the ETU did have a

policy to employ women in trades assistants' jobs and a number were employed from Perth. It did not last long though. Women couldn't get into the FEDFU, until they voted in a woman by mistake. As the story goes, someone said, "My god, that's a woman, let's send this application to Perth and make the company employ a ticketed person so that we don't get a woman". As it happened the company employed a ticketed shovel driver who turned out to be woman, the only woman I can recall being employed on site in the FEDFU while I was there.

Janis: What was the FEDFU's voting-in process?

Julie: The FEDFU on that site covered the powerhouse, shovels and trains. So the route into the FEDFU was when someone left as a shovel driver. As I recall, each section of that union voted in people to their area when someone left.

Janis: So the union in fact controlled entry into the jobs?

Julie: Absolutely. The metalworkers as well, but I think they only had a very limited number of serviceman (that's what they called them) jobs that AWU members could apply for. The metalworkers did not cover TAs at Pannawonica, the AWU did.

Janis: And how were decisions made about voting people in?

Julie: From the shop floor. The AWU did not vote people into employment but they controlled the transfer system. Vacant AWU jobs were determined by seniority of employment with the company. Thus the company could not say who should be in a job or not.

Janis: What was your first job on production?

Julie: I actually started in town on landscaping crew.

Janis: That was a gardening job?

Julie: Yes. But it also involved using plant so I was using a backhoe, a seven or eight ton truck and things like that. I stayed on that crew for about four months. We had a leading hand who was a female. That was quite unusual but was most likely because she was a tradesperson and the company probably had difficulty getting a tradesperson in this trade. After this I went onto blast crew, mainly because I didn't want to work shift work. The mines regulations specified that you could only blast from sunrise to sunset so we worked days. We started very early sometimes at 5 am or earlier. I worked on blast crew for most of my work history in the Pilbara. The last year I worked at the company's swimming pool in town.

Janis: Can I go back to the gardening job for a minute. In any sense was that breaking you into the Pilbara? Was that a company strategy to see whether you could handle jobs at the mine?

Julie: That wouldn't be my perception. Jobs on production were allocated by seniority. That would have been the first job classification that came up that I could fill as an AWU member. AWU jobs on production were filled by seniority so the job I got, like all new starters, would have been one that other workers did not want. Non-AWU classifications such as trades were filled from Perth or, if they were semi skilled or unskilled, the membership would vote a worker (usually an AWU member) into the job and therefore the union. Landscaping would have been a job in low demand because it did not attract a lot of penalties or overtime.

Janis: Tell me about your first job out at the mine - the blasting job.

Julie: On blast crew there were essentially three classifications - the junior powder monkey, a truck driver and a senior powder monkey. Again, the jobs were based on seniority although I'm not so sure about the leading hand, I think the company appointed that person. The crew consisted of about 7-8 people including the leading hand. At that time we had a person who stayed out at the anfo shed at the old mine who loaded the trucks with anfo. I started as a junior powder monkey like everyone else and progressed to senior powder monkey. We had two trucks and three people per truck. However, we rarely had a full crew on either truck. Essentially the actual work duties that you did were very similar except for the truck driver's job, obviously this was a little different. Basically the daily routine was loading the blast patterns with anfo. A blast pattern is drilled by a drilling rig. It consists of a large number of blast holes that are drilled in a prescribed formation to a prescribed depth. Blast crew loaded these holes, which are collectively called the blast pattern with anfo (ammonium nitrate and diesel oil). The blast patterns in Pannawonica that I loaded were on top of the mesas. So you were usually working with a shovel digging from the last shot you did below you, and with a drill finishing the pattern you were on. At Deepdale the holes were about 20 to 25 metres deep, sometimes deeper. Sometimes they were shallower if it was a development shot.

Janis: What did you do on a typical day there?

Julie: We did around two or three loads a day on each truck. We use to load about 7,500 tons on each 10 ton truck. The tonnage of anfo loaded each day really depended on who turned up for work. Being a small crew, holidays, rostered days off and blown days really had a big impact on how many truck loads were done each day. You had a minimum of two people on each truck. With four people at work you could man both trucks but with only three you could

only use one. Sometimes all the three loads on the truck you were working on would go to three different blast patterns. If there was an urgency to get a particular shot off then it would all go into the one pattern.

Janis: How did you actually put the anfo in the holes?

Julie: We used to drive through the blast pattern stopping every four holes - you could describe this as a square with the blast holes marking each corner and with the truck parked at the top. Before pumping the anfo down the blast hole we would drop a booster on cordex down each hole. The normal procedure was that the whole pattern would have this done to it before it was loaded with anfo. We used to attach a heavy rubber hose to the back of the truck, the other end we would put down the blast hole. Obviously, we started at one of the blast holes nearest the truck and worked our way around until we finished at the blast hole closest to the other side of the truck. We pumped ammonium nitrate from the truck using an auger. At this stage the ammonium nitrate was mixed with diesel oil, thus it became anfo. When the anfo was being pumped down the blast hole the powder monkey would measure the amount of anfo pumped into each blast hole. A tape measure with a weight attached to the end of it was used to measure the distance the anfo was from the top of the blast hole. When the anfo reached the prescribed distance the truck driver would be signaled to turn off the auger. The powder monkey would then move the hose to the next blast hole. And so it would go on until the truck had been unloaded.

Janis: How frequent was blasting day?

Julie: It would depend on production, how big the last shot was and things like that, ships' schedules and so on. I can't really recall accurately but probably once a month, maybe more, maybe less, it all depended.

Janis: Were there any other women on the blast crew at that stage?

Julie: There had been other women on blast crew. There was no other women on blast crew while I was there except for a month or so at the very beginning of my time on the crew.

Janis: What kind of training did you receive?

Julie: On the job training. During the time that I was there I did my Shot Firers' Ticket. Most of the crew did it. It was the first time that they'd had any sort of formal training for blast crew. I think if I can recollect correctly it was a week or two course. We did the course on site. The company brought a shot firer from Port Hedland who was qualified to take the course.

Janis: What was your supervision like?

Julie: We didn't have a lot of direct supervision. We were part of production but because we were located out the old mine we weren't really considered part of the production workforce. We never got invited to production stop work meetings for example. We were also on days which meant we didn't fit into the relationships production workers formed with their own shift including supervisors. We were also located at the old mine - a 20 minute drive away. So, production supervisors left us alone really. Our foreman was also foreman of the drill crew. The actual daily routine of blasting was fairly self evident. Our foreman would tell the leading hand what he wanted done that day and the leading hand would tell us. We did have a lot of contact with our foreman on blast day.

Janis: How did you get on with the foreman?

Julie: OK. I didn't see him much. It would be my impression that he was not keen on women out at the mine but he was careful what he said around me. He did have other women working on his crews. As I recall, there was at least one other woman working on the drilling rigs when I started out on production.

Janis: What were some of the issues for you as a worker in the workplace, the pluses and minuses of the job, if you like?

Julie: The good thing about the job was that it was fairly autonomous. You knew you had a set amount to do, you did that, and there was a certain amount of freedom in that you weren't constantly supervised. You weren't constantly driving from point A to point B as a Haulpak driver might do, and because we were located out at the old mine, which as I said, was a 20 minute drive, you had a break in scenery and the monotony because you were driving from one mine to the other. You had bush scenery not haulpak roads. It was also days! The work was actually hard labouring so if you weren't in fairly good condition the work could be quite exhausting. Blast day was the worst because you were also backfilling, and shovelling three metres of dirt by hand into each blast hole in very high temperatures. On blast day you could be fairly certain that you were going to be sandblasted especially if it was windy.

Janis: Were there other negatives?

Julie: The physical labouring was really quite hard, especially in the heat and dust. You were right on top of the mesas, and because the patterns had all been bulldozed before the rigs began

drilling you were loading holes with no shade available at all. You had shovels below you tossing up dust, drills beside you doing the same, and you were doing the same when the auger from the anfo truck was operating. The dust would stick to you especially because you inevitably got diesel oil on you from handling the measuring tape. The other bad thing about the job was if the anfo was sticky and you had trouble pumping it out of the truck. This meant you could be standing in the heat for much longer than usual. This also occurred if the operator was inexperienced and kept blocking the auger with anfo.

Janis: You were a member of the AWU?

Julie: Yes.

Janis: Were you an active member?

Julie: Yes, I attended meetings and I was a rep at times.

Janis: Were you as a powder monkey treated differently because you were a woman, did you encounter any discrimination?

Julie: At the surface level no, I wasn't treated any differently from other new crew members. However the fact that I was a woman and the ideological notions of what that meant had an impact. Essentially my perception of working with men in that kind of environment is that they give every new crew member a hard time until they prove themselves and that's what they did to me.

Janis: A hard time in what sense?

Julie: It was both subtle and not so subtle. Some but not all of the crew verbally gave new crew members a hard time and things like that. They'd try and get you to do their work or they'd tell you the wrong thing to do. Things like that. You had to learn the ropes so to speak. I actually had a crew member throw an esky of iced water over me whilst I was driving one of the air-conditioned trucks. You could say this was related to gender and it was of course, but I know that person would have done, and did, things like that to anyone he wanted to intimidate.

About a month later I did the same thing back to him. He was so surprised. He kept saying to me, "I can't believe that you would do this - *in Gary's new truck!*" Now that was certainly a gendered response! I dirtied the seat.

Janis: Were you harassed sexually?

Julie: I personally wasn't harassed much. Not overtly anyway. This may have been because I was in a relationship. However I don't tend to get this kind of behaviour from men who know me. When I first went out to blast crew there were no naked pin-ups on the walls whereas in light vehicles they were plastered everywhere. The woman who was on the crew before me may have had them taken down.

Janis: Did company policies impinge on you in any way or did you have any contact with management?

Julie: When I was on blast crew you were left to do your work. When I was in the cleaning department you were left to do your work. When I was in the pool I was left to do my work. There was very little contact with foremen, your contact was with the leading hand. This is most certainly indicative of the power that the unions had at the workplace.

Janis: What about your social role? Did you find that people's expectations of you were different in the Pilbara because of the nature of the community?

Julie: Yes and no. People had similar expectations about what women should and should not do but I think they were more intense in the Pilbara than in Perth. I lived in married accommodation but I never married and I didn't have children. Almost on a weekly basis or even more frequently I was asked by both men and women alike when was I going to get married and when was I going to have children. For about four years this was almost a continuous feature of how people would interact with me. After this period it subsided, but by this time I had really stopped listening. However, years later a relative of mine who had spent some time in the town after this period said to me something like "Thank god I've left that town. If one more person had of asked me when you were going to get married and have children I was going to scream!"

It's like the discussion we had earlier in terms of the perception of what and where a woman should work. It was the same in terms of a woman's role in the family. Of course both are intimately related. And employment prospects for women in closed towns like Pannawonica were very limited. There was about 1 000 people in town and about 200 houses. There were only about a dozen single women out the mine and even less married women on production. I can only think of a few including myself. Most women had families.

Janis: Did your experiences in the Pilbara have a lasting effect on you?

Julie: Oh, of course. I've worked in non-traditional blue collar occupations with men in small work groups. I have an appreciation of how men and women respond to women who don't fit their own ideas of what a woman should be like. It's terribly confronting for people. It's not confronting because in this case women are doing something they don't like, it's because it challenges their own perceptions about what and who they are themselves. It is just as much if not more of a challenge to women as is to men. In a sense I'm still getting this today. It is really common for people to attribute my academic ability, if they see it, to others, usually the ability of men. This also manifests when people devalue my work in the Pilbara by suggesting that I should get some work experience!

And of course, the kind of politicisation that one gains from experiencing life in an isolated mining community is quite intense. I think it gives an appreciation of what the nature of work is really like for most working people. And in a sense my work experience in the Pilbara has had a huge impact on me as I am now writing a PhD on the topic.

Janis: How are your experiences there connected to what you are doing now?

Julie: I'm writing the history of how the iron ore industry was organised. The selection of the topic was a bit of an accident. I really wouldn't have chosen it because as you know I was up there in 1986/87 during the Robe River dispute. So it's sort of like going back and having a look at the whole thing. It's really looking at unionisation through to effective de-unionisation. The central theme is union organising, but I am looking at this in terms of the relationship organising had with the women, ethnic people, Aboriginal people, Torres Strait Islanders who helped build the railway lines, and of course the working class. The research is inherently connected to my own work background as it is focused at the shopfloor rather than solely at the institutional level.

Janis: You're interested in the social relations of the environment, as well as its industrial relations?

Julie: Well, in the Pilbara iron ore industry you can't separate them, they are intimately connected. The link between work and community has been very strong in this industry.

Janis: So the experience changed you. Do you think you had an effect either in the workplace or the community?

Julie: Not really.

Janis: Perhaps you are too modest.

Julie: No, not modest. I didn't have any more impact than anyone else that did the kind of work that I did. I did heavy manual work but I had a background where I'd done a lot of long distance running as a teenager and was physically strong enough to do the work. In the Pilbara what people do is they stereotype women. Most likely it is still the same. You were either the domestic woman or the sort of woman who's more of a man than a man. I was talking about this before, but in the sense of people's expectations of what women should be like. The stereotypes aren't about the person who is being stereotyped, they have more to say about the people doing the stereotyping. In this case, in part, it is a cultural manifestation that is expressing a collective way of coping, or adjusting, or trying to prevent societal change.

Janis: What brought your time in the Pilbara to an end?

Julie: Well, I had been active in the union and the Robe River dispute was really not a pleasant experience. I actually left in March of 1987 which was when my long service leave was due. I was happy to go. Not only because of Peko. I'd wanted to leave for a considerable number of years so that in effect, I could start what I'm currently doing now. Although I had no idea that I would continue on to a PhD.

The Infant Health Service: Doctors, Nurses and Regulatory Processes

Ann-Claire Larsen*

Sociological analyses of Western health institutions by Willis¹, Turner², Gamarnikow³ and others identify structural differentiation and inequalities between medicine and nursing. According to Edwards, all writers of historical accounts of the rise of medicine agree that the position of doctors vis-à-vis nurses results from:

the particular combination of market control, state authorisation, specialist expertise, self-regulation, public demand, social status and moral worth, not to mention its class and gender characteristics⁴.

“Medical dominance” has become the shorthand term used to summarise this combination of structural factors responsible for medicine's dominant position within the health care system. As an explanatory tool, however, “medical dominance” offers little understanding of how nurses are controlled at the periphery of the health bureaucracy. I argue that the dichotomy between superordinate and subordinate positions implicit in “medical dominance” oversimplifies the complexities of doctor/nurse relations at the levels of administration, knowledge and clinical practice. I also argue that the medical profession does not repress or force nurses into submission. Instead, nurses as well as doctors are subjected to complex and diverse processes of regulation that include meeting formal requirements of their occupation and employing processes of self-regulation. By way of clarification, I use the word self-regulation to refer to an individual's capacity to reflect on his/her own subjectivity and to rectify responses rather than viewing self-regulation of nurses as a group.

In order to explore regulatory processes, I use Western Australia's Infant Health Service (IHS) as a case study. The Infant Health Service was a public health strategy inaugurated in 1923 to improve WA's infant mortality rate. It was a part of an international movement that emerged predominantly in New Zealand, Britain and Australia at the beginning of the twentieth century. Its inauguration constituted an historical moment when for the first time, doctors and nurses could think, speak, write and work within a new medical discipline called infant health. Owing to advances in medical knowledge, many of the health problems that had beset the infant population at that time were found to be preventable. Infant health nurses aimed to educate mothers in the management and care of infants.

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By the 1970s, the issues that concerned the IHS had changed from a focus on infant's physical health to include pre-school children's emotional health issues. Consequently, the Infant Health Service was renamed the Child Health Service (CHS) in 1970. For historical correctness, I refer to this Service as the IHS or the CHS according to the time period under discussion.

My approach has been influenced by the work of Foucault who asks such questions as, “how is power exercised”, and “what exactly happens when someone exercises power over another?”⁵. This contrasts, he goes on to say, with analyses of the 1960s that “defined power in terms of prohibition: power, it was said, is what prohibits, what prevents people doing something”. Foucault⁶ also suggests that the question “who exercises power?” cannot be resolved unless the other question “how does it happen?” is resolved simultaneously. This emphasis on “how” power is exercised does not rule out the importance of the structural factors that Edwards⁷ identifies. Instead, I draw attention to subtle details of regulatory power relations at the periphery of the bureaucracy.

Methodology

My data were amassed from two main sources. First, much of the historical data are pieced together from archival documents that included notes written on scraps of paper, hand written letters, undated leaflets and newspaper cuttings, photographs, and reflections from doctors and nurses. Health reports from within restricted files in the State Library and the “historical corner” of the community health library also provide information.

Second, I draw on extensive interviews with forty child health nurses who were interviewed about their work experiences between 1986 and 1988. Two medical officers affiliated with the CHS for two to three decades were also interviewed.

Historical Insights Into Power Relations

I begin examining power relations by exploring how Truby King maintained his eminence within the infant health movement that greatly influenced IHS nursing in Western Australia in its early years. Truby King is singled out because Roberta Jull, the first Infant Health Supervisor in WA, left letters about her experiences at his training school that provide insights into power relations. The following, therefore, is based on Jull's perception of Truby King.

Truby King and other prominent infant health doctors required support, loyalty and advice from nurses to assist in maintaining their position of superordination. Dr (later Sir) Frederick Truby King, the New Zealand leader of the early infant health movement, achieved international acclaim for his infant health work. In a letter to her daughter, Jull wrote that Truby King deserved great credit, first, for simplifying the calculation of infant formulas and, second, for promoting breast feeding. His third accomplishment was:

his ability to get hold of the imagination of large numbers of people to take the matters up. It has taken 19 years here to reach its present pitch⁸.

Truby King was able to align his priorities and objectives with people who took up his cause as their own.

According to Jull, Truby King's success resulted also from the impeccable work of committed nurses. Jull wrote:

He gets things done though because he does have the ability to select excellent assistants and to obtain and keep their loyal co-operation. It is the women who do the work as he admits when he thinks of it. Miss Patrick appears to be the chief (letter from Jull to Dr Dale⁹).

Miss Patrick was the Director of Plunket Nursing for New Zealand and managed the training of "Plunket nurses"¹⁰. In reiterating that Truby King selected "a very excellent type of woman as matrons and nurses", Jull complained:

What is quite wrong is that he does not give credit or acknowledgment to various women and men from whom he has received help and inspiration - Frenchmen, Germans, English, Americans. The actual work of course is done by the women who while loyal to his general principles, modify them when necessary . . . Truby King's wife . . . has a very quiet manner and gives me the idea that all the time she is on the watch for Sir Truby King against possible dissenters . . . Truby King has been described as a delightful friend but a bitter and unscrupulous enemy.¹¹

Truby King's capacity to display extremes in emotions played a part in regulating his relations with others. Truby King received unconditional support from his wife, his daughter, Miss Patrick and other doctors and nurses who assisted in catapulting the movement to its heights during the 1920s and 1930s. In the light of this dedication from Miss Patrick and her colleagues who took up Truby King's cause as their own, repression or coercion was not an issue.

Truby King did not receive unconditional support from everyone. Among themselves, Jull and her colleagues criticised his supposed competence, efficiency and integrity. Jull explained:

Sir Truby King seems to think Dr Scantlebury and I wish to take almost as extensive a training as the nurses and the same kind. We do not feel that necessary. He certainly has as Dr Cumpston said to me in Melbourne, the eccentricity of Genius. Yesterday he kept us all three from 10.30 am until 5.45 pm dancing attendance on him. In all those

hours we learnt so little that one hour's real work would have done as well. He talks incessantly, more continuously than any woman I have heard.¹²

With Jull and her colleague passively accepting their position as students of Truby King, his position of superiority was reinforced. The cause that Truby King promoted, his fame and his position safeguarded him against a direct challenge by these medical officers who saw his inadequacies.¹³ Reiger¹⁴ points out, moreover, that this era of infant health was beset with acrimony, jealousies and personal ambitions among doctors.

Relations Between Doctors and Nurses Within WA's IHS

Medicine's position of dominance, as Germov¹⁵ argues, is being eroded with the introduction of managerialism and competition into the public health system. In the early years of WA's Infant Health Service "medical dominance" was also challenged, albeit on a smaller scale. I use Eleanor Stang's experience to illustrate regulatory processes.

Dr Eleanor Stang, the second and most influential infant health supervisor in WA (1929-1955), was constrained by the bureaucratic position that she occupied. Like Roberta Jull, Stang was directed by and accountable to the Infant Health Association, Local Committees and the Commissioner of Public Health, all of whom challenged her autonomy. For instance in 1939, Stang's duties were outlined in the following memo received from Atkinson, the Commissioner of Public Health:

In the first place, the Department pays certain subsidies and it is your responsibility from time to time to inspect the centres and sub-centres and to report to me any conditions which you consider indicate departure from a reasonably efficient standard of satisfactory work.¹⁶

Further, in a letter to Vera Scantlebury (later Scantlebury Brown), a Melbourne colleague, Stang complained of the difficulties she encountered in her attempts to have infant health centres built. The Under Secretary of the Infant Health Association had accused Stang of pushing

the work ahead too fast here and we have too many centres and sub-centres to maintain for our small population. I do not agree with him, of course, because I look at the preventive medicine standpoint and he looks at it from the financial standpoint.¹⁷

And in another letter to the Commissioner of Public Health, Stang claimed:

I am being caused a great deal of annoyance and irritation by Local Committees constantly interfering and trying to tell me how the centres in their districts should be run.¹⁸

Stang could not avoid criticism and directives from IHS managers. Her response to criticism was to seek affirmation from her network of interstate medical colleagues.

While the Commissioner of Public Health was concerned that Stang supervise nurses adequately, E H Gray, the President of the Infant Health Association, was also concerned that Stang ensure nurses perform their duties efficiently. He wrote:

It is an unchallengeable fact that members of the medical profession, either male or female, cannot effectively control nurses. No matter how conscientious an infant health nurse may be, lack of supervision must have the effect of reducing the efficiency of the service.¹⁹

Stang was clearly constrained within her bureaucratic position. However, she had assets and advantages that were unavailable to nurses. Stang's cultural and educational capital manifested also through her professional status, newspaper reports of her accomplishments and international visits and conferences, public appearances and plaques displaying her name set her apart from the nurses.²⁰ Stang's position in relation to nurses was obvious at first glance. Hilda Jury, the first nurse administrator (1954-1974), described how Stang's stylish way of dressing contrasted starkly with the uniforms and veils that nurses wore. Media coverage of Stang's achievements also served to legitimate the IHS in the eyes of infant health nurses and their clients. Rarely did nurses receive such recognition, although in the early years several nurses were well known for their work.

Stang's Strategies for Ensuring Nurses were Efficient

In the calculated fashion of an employer, Stang preferred to employ single women without young children in the hope that work would be their primary concern. Stang considered a nurse to be an employee first, and a mother second. Standards of care or responsibility for children, which were expected of mothers, did not apply to nurses who were also mothers. Although this conflicts with the Service's philosophical base - concern for the well-being of children - it made sound administrative sense. Single women would also be more easily relocated to meet staffing requirements.

To maintain adequate staffing levels, Stang provided incentives to attract nurses to the IHS. Consequently, by 1951, IHS nurses in WA received the highest pay of any nurses in Australia and were offered furnished flats at nominal rents.²¹ At times, Stang was less generous towards nurses. As supervisor of the IHS and infant health nurses' employer, Stang was in a position to withhold information regarding entitlements that nurses might have welcomed. This anti-unionist stance served to deceive the nurses.

Undoubtedly, Stang's personal qualities contributed to her success at gaining nurses' co-operation. Stang also fostered loyalty and dedication from nurses by extending a hand of friendship. This meant inviting them to parties, and exchanging recipes and Christmas cards, but she also requested their continuing support for the IHS while she was on long service leave. As a result, many nurses felt affirmed, needed and valued in their work. At times she protected nurses and the IHS against outside criticism. For example, when a client accused a nurse of recommending dipping babies' dummies in brandy, Stang wrote, "I feel sure that none of our nurses would be guilty of recommending brandy on babies' dummies".²²

Occupational Means of Regulating Nurses in IHS Centres

Given that IHS centres are scattered throughout Perth suburbs and country towns, IHS nurses could not be subjected to direct supervision. And yet the majority of nurses fulfilled their occupational responsibilities. The following sections explore how institutional processes have contributed to regulating nurses and maintaining levels of efficiency.

Administrative considerations

Clearly, nurses' need for employment as well as their education and training contributed to ensuring that they carry out their duties efficiently, but other subtle processes were also at work. Nurses were required to conform to the routines of their occupation. For example, one important means, timetables, served to regulate nurses throughout the day. As timetables varied slightly from centre to centre, each nurse had a copy of every other nurse's timetable. Consequently, it was possible to know whether a nurse was visiting homes or hospitals or seeing clients by appointment, for example. Several nurses I interviewed explained that it was possible to manipulate their timetable to their advantage. They might visit homes during their lunch hour rather than during the designated home-visiting mornings.

Statistics were an important regulatory means to identify and determine nurses' workload. Management decisions were based on statistical evidence, and many nurses have judged themselves and others by rates of attendance. Many nurses felt that administrators judged their performance at work by attendance rates at their centres. Elizabeth felt guilty about not seeing more clients and claimed, "my monthly average is 220, and I know the ideal is 250". They felt guilty when they have not attained the "ideals", and reassurance when they did. Regulatory processes such as these were designed to ensure that a nurse worked to capacity. Her workload was recorded daily and compiled for an annual report. Records in diaries provided further evidence and validation of a nurse's work-load.

Most nurses also kept their diaries and files in order, dressed appropriately in uniforms, and presented themselves and their centres in acceptable and predictable ways. In so doing, they imposed on themselves a “constant judgement of skill, punctuality, comportment, language and conduct which were embodied in the organisation and norms of the institution”.²³

Administrative control tightens as nurses supervise nurses

Nurses became state employees in 1945 when conditions were created for the nursing hierarchy to develop. The taxation system provided the necessary funds to employ supervisory nurses. As a consequence of employing administrative nurses and educators, nurses were supervised, graded, judged, reviewed and assessed periodically. This established a two-way regulatory process that has involved dynamic self-definition among employees, in addition to bureaucratic processes of regulation.

The differing hierarchical positions and responsibilities among nurses influenced their relations with one another, and ultimately found expression in tension between field nurses and administrative nurses. Administrative nurses became identifiable as an “elite” within the hierarchy, not only from their occupational responsibilities, but also because they have not been required to wear uniforms. Uniforms symbolise the position that nurses occupied within the nursing hierarchy, and their relationship with those who did not. Consequently, uniforms reflect power relations and are generally worn by subordinate groups.

Before the career structure for nursing was instituted in the 1980s whereby nurses were promoted on merit, appointments to senior or administrative positions were made informally. Tensions arose as it became apparent that friendships, networking or knowing other nurses in the upper echelons of the nursing hierarchy played an important part in securing a desired position.

Union meetings have also been another area of contention between administrative and field nurses. Until the 1980s, child health nurses operated their own branch of the Royal Australian Nurses' Federation. All child health nurses, whether field nurses or administrators, attended these meetings because it was assumed that nurses had similar concerns despite their position in the hierarchy. In such company, undoubtedly field nurses' complaints and protests were stifled.

Although nurses have been members of a health team, unless their clients require additional service, nurses have no reason to communicate with other professionals on behalf of their clients. The physical isolation and independence of infant health nurses does not translate into autonomy from regulatory processes. Nurses have been constrained indirectly by occupational requirements and self-regulatory processes. Molly²⁴, an IHS nurse, explained her feelings:

When I did clinic work in the country [for 13 years], I felt guilty about taking my pay. Fancy being paid for doing something you like doing as much as this, I thought. I did a lot of travelling and the students used to come down to the country and say this is just like a lovely holiday, and I'd think they would be coming back to Perth and telling them [administrative nurses] that and it wouldn't sound very good.

The geographic distance between the administrators at HDWA and Molly's centre did not alleviate or diminish her sensitivity to surveillance and self-regulatory mechanisms. Images of self-imposed dedication, genuine concern, stoicism and responsibility endeared nurses to their clients. These qualities ensured most nurses were responsible workers whose commitment extended beyond their occupational requirements.

Regulating infant health nurses through knowledge

Nurses' knowledge is a means through which nurses were regulated. The medical, scientific "truths" that were promulgated were legitimated through their distinctiveness from women's traditional work in the home. These two realms, however, were not always easily separated. Nurses' familial experiences were grounded in social and cultural experiences that, as IHS practitioners, they were attempting to change.

Stang instituted the annual "refresher course" for nurses in 1949 in an attempt to ensure nurses' knowledge complied with the official, current IHS position. Since that time, nurses have been encouraged and expected to attend these courses, but they cannot be forced to do so. Several nurses, as they approached retirement, refused to attend. Several of the nurses I interviewed claimed that refresher courses (later called annual conferences) were a waste of time. They believe that their work experience provided an adequate and appropriate pool of knowledge. A renewable handbook was produced in an attempt to ensure each nurse had access to current information.

"Refresher courses" were arenas where information was exchanged, and power relations between nursing and medicine reinforced. For example, at the annual Refresher Course for Infant Health nurses in 1958, the Professor of Child Health William MacDonald, promoted the notion that "nature knows best" to support his plea that nurses must become better informed. This public display of knowledge and criticism was also a subtle means that served to reinforce medical superiority.

Not only have supervisors and other professionals demonstrated concern about nurses' knowledge, so, too, have some clients. Clients have reported nurses to supervisory nurses and doctors, other clients, family and friends when they have suspected that a nurse had violated a "norm" or scientific truth.

Despite the foregoing, nurses have contributed to and extended the body of infant (and later child health) knowledge. For example, nurses advised doctors when feeding schedules proved inappropriate for their clients. These inversions of power relations, although transitory, are often overlooked in analyses that ignore relations at the periphery of bureaucracies. As Turner²⁴ suggests, although nurses are in principle subservient within a formal bureaucratic structure, some nurses enjoy *de facto* control over their work situation. This situation suggests that at times a complex dynamic functions that is more a negotiated or understated relation rather than a rigid enactment of a hierarchical line of command.

Regulating the clinical work of IHS nurses

In the early years, the efficiency of nurses was assessed according to their managerial skills. As mentioned, Stang's occupational responsibilities included inspecting centres to ensure files and records were in order. When she found sloppiness and that regulatory mechanisms had failed, Stang refused to accept a nurse's excuses for inefficiency and reported her to the CPH. Stang thereby displayed her professional competence by not protecting a nurse whom she considered a liability for the IHS.

Relieving nurses, who replace field nurses for holidays and sick leave, assessed files, diaries and notices, and reported to administrators those nurses who had violated occupational norms or falsified their workload. These types of incidents are exceptional, as most nurses met their occupational requirements and were their own "wardens".

The Subjectivity of Nurses has been Enmeshed in Regulatory Processes at the Clinical Level

The subjectivity of nurses has become an important consideration in regard to their effectiveness in maintaining their client population. As Rose²⁵ argues, psychological expertise now has a vital role in maximising the use of human resources in institutional life. Adele, a senior nurse, explained that nurses who work alone and, particularly, those who overcome cultural differences to work with Aborigines should be praised and encouraged because of the difficulties they encounter. Adele was adamant that nurses who work in community-based nursing must not be given a sense of having failed. Instead, nurses must be made to feel cared for, and encouraged in their tasks and responsibilities that few people would attempt.

Many nurses care for themselves in order to cope with work that can be emotionally exhausting. Elizabeth recognised the limits to her capacity to achieve occupational goals and to

change her clients' child care practices. Caring for oneself, she says, requires a balance between achievable objectives and "ideal" occupational objectives.

Elizabeth believed she succeeded in her work because she balanced personal truthfulness with achievable occupational objectives. As a result of attending a psycho-therapy group that facilitated self-knowledge, she said she was able to care for herself and her clients appropriately in a selfless, but not self-effacing way. Through introspection, Elizabeth and others learned to judge themselves. These regulatory processes involving self-regulation "take place through a variety of 'operations on [people's] own bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on their own conduct'".²⁶ Hence, through processes that attempt to govern or regulate their subjectivity, nurses have been shaped and shape themselves in ways that are functional for maintaining the CHS.

Nurses Protest

Nurses have not always complied with regulatory means. At times they have protested at perceived injustices and on other occasions, have protested against attempts to change their occupational responsibilities. Some nurses have used subversion as a means of maintaining control and/or avoiding regulation by doctors and other nurses. As a form of protest, nurses have withheld sensitive information about their clients. During surveillance procedures, nurses have gathered a wealth of information about their clients. By not adhering always to their protocol, nurses have protected their clients from medical and nursing scrutiny. As a result, they have inspired confidence in their clients that enabled them to further intervene in families. This protective function indicates territorial rivalries between doctors and nurses, and within nursing groups. Hence, nurses endure a paradoxical position where, on the one hand, they decide which aspects of their clients' lives are available for medical scrutiny, while, on the other, they conduct surveillance procedures.

Over the twentieth century changes have occurred within the IHS. Administratively, not only nurses and doctors but other health care workers including social workers have been employed within this Service. At the knowledge level, child health issues have expanded and nurses training has shifted to tertiary institutions. Clinically, nurses' work has changed to accommodate changing health issues. Pre-school children's emotional and social health issues have been included in the CHS's agenda. This means that the CHS's targeted population has increased from infants and their mothers to pre-school children within the range of family structures.

Conclusion

The concept of medical dominance provides an understanding of doctor/nurse relations at the structural level, but fails to capture the complexities of power relations at the periphery of the health bureaucracy. This paper shows that all employees of the Infant and Child Health Services were subjected to intense and dynamic forms of bureaucratic regulation regarding knowledge and at the administrative and clinical levels. Nurses were constrained by the requirements of their occupation, and by other regulatory means including timetables, periodic assessments at peer reviews, investigations from relievers, and feed-back from dissatisfied clients. Despite this, they maintained levels of efficiency because they felt responsible towards their clients, loyal towards their medical and nursing colleagues and dedicated to the aims of the IHS. Nurses experienced feelings of anxiety, disappointment, guilt and pleasure in their work, and in these ways, they were regulated. They have also used self-regulatory processes to achieve satisfaction with, and efficiency in, their work. Regulatory processes have not always been entirely successful and some nurses have protested against perceived injustices. Other nurses reported to me instances where nurses have not conformed. Overall, however, nurses have conformed to regulatory processes in order to fulfil their responsibilities as advocates of their clients.

¹ Willis, E. (1983) *Medical Dominance: The Division of Labour in Australian Health Care* Sydney, George Allen & Unwin.

² Turner, B.S. (1986) "The Vocabulary of Complaints: Nursing, Professionalism and Job Context" *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 22:3, pp.368-386.

³ Gamarnikow, E. (1978) "Sexual Division of Labour: the Case of Nursing" in Kuhne, A. and Wolpe, A. (eds) *Feminism and Materialism* London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp.96-123.

⁴ Edwards, A. (1988) *Regulation and Repression: The Study of Social Control* Sydney, Allen & Unwin, p.170.

⁵ In Kritzman, L.D. (1988) *Michel Foucault: Politics Philosophy Culture Interviews and Other Writings 1977-1984* London, Routledge, p.102.

⁶ Ibid p.103.

⁷ Edwards, op.cit.

⁸ 15/11/1925 Env. 13 BLF (hereafter Battye Library File) 956A.

⁹ 11/11/1925 Env. 13 BLF 956A.

¹⁰ Truby King, F. (1924) "Essentials for Insuring Good Nutrition in Infancy as Bearing on the Prevention of Infantile Diarrhoea" in Supplement to *The Medical Journal of Australia* Sat. July 12, 481-485. Truby King and the Society for the Welfare of Women and Children instituted the New Zealand system of scientific infant care. Truby King (op.cit. p.482) explains that this Society was later called the "Plunket Society". "Plunket" groups were established in Melbourne (and Sydney) as rival groups to Australian systems of infant care, such as "Tresillian". For detailed discussion, see Reiger, K. (1986) "Mothering Deskilled? Australian Childrearing and the 'Experts'". *Community Health Studies* Vol X, No 1, pp.39-46

¹¹ Jull personal letter 15/11/1925 from Dunedin, NA Env. 13 BLF 956A.

¹² Jull letter to Dr Dale 11/11/1925 Env. 13 BLF 956A).

¹³ Jull was not alone in her disdain for Truby King. He owed money to Henrietta Mann, one of Jull's Victorian colleagues. In a letter to Jull, Mann wrote that Miss Patrick was "horribly shocked when I told her how Truby King had cheated me" (letter 12/1/1926 written in Dunedin). Miss Patrick was prepared to face the media on Truby King's behalf against these two, if necessary. Thereby, she sought to deflect exposure of his faults, and to preserve his integrity and standing.

¹⁴ Op.cit. p.136-138.

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- ¹⁵ Germov, J. (1995) "Medi-fraud, managerialism and the decline of medical autonomy: deprofessionalisation and proletarianisation reconsidered" *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 31:3 p.51-66.
- ¹⁶ 28/10/1939 BLF 1927 147.
- ¹⁷ Letter dated 26/7/40 BLF 1945 878.
- ¹⁸ Stang 18/3/1948 BLF 878.
- ¹⁹ Letter to Commissioner of Public Health 7/9/1945 BLF 1945 878.
- ²⁰ see Bourdieu, P. (1973) "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction" in Brown, R. (ed) *Knowledge, Education and Cultural Change* London, Tavistock Publications, pp.71-112.
- ²¹ *Melbourne Herald* 2/4/51.
- ²² Stang's letter to Rushton 6/9/51 BLF 1950 85.
- ²³ see Rose, N. (1990) "Psychology as a Social Science" in Parker, I. and Shorter, J. (eds) *Deconstructing Social Psychology* London, Routledge pp.103-116.
- ²⁴ Informants' names are withheld at their request.
- ²⁴ Turner, op.cit. p.376.
- ²⁵ Op.cit. p.x.
- ²⁶ Foucault quoted in Rabinow, P. (ed) *The Foucault Reader* Harmondsworth, Penguin, p.11.

Sweating in the Clothing Industry - Then and Now

Joan Williams*

One of the forgotten women in our history, Mamie Swanton, campaigned fiercely from the beginning of the century against the sweating of women and children in the clothing trade in Western Australia - she called them the “white slaves” of the West

May Hines Swanton (nee Connolly) was born in Melbourne of Irish parents. Though educated by Benedictine nuns, she became an atheist. A tailoress, she had come to Kalgoorlie from the Eastern States in the late 1890s. A firm believer in union organisation, she soon made contact with the Eastern Goldfields’ Amalgamated Tailors and Tailoresses Society, founded in 1897. She then came to Perth and took up the cause of skilled women workers. Their needs, she believed, were being ignored by the wholly male Tailors’ Union of WA. With the help of four other women, she founded the Perth Tailoresses’ Union in 1900 and became its first president, an office she held for five years¹.

A fierce flame of anger burned in her as she uncovered more and more terrible examples of these “white slaves” in the midst of a complacent society. Each new injustice she uncovered drove her to take her campaign further, from denouncing in the press employers who put forward argument that it was charity to give piecework to people who needed it, to having the question debated in Parliament itself. Success came in 1907, when the Arbitration Court granted an award and fixed a standard wage².

But if she came back today, how horrified she would be to find that, despite her achievements, the exploitation of women and children, as invisible outworkers in the clothing Industry today, is disturbingly similar to the “white slavery” that she had condemned.

White Slaves of the West

In the sweatshops Mamie found women working 70 hours a week on piecework rates that brought them three shillings and sixpence for making a dozen shirts. The women were

* Joan Williams has long been a social activist. She writes under the pen name of “Justina Williams”. As this issue was going to press, Joan was made a member of the General Division in the Australia Day honours, for “service to the community as a writer, particularly in the areas of peace, social equality and protection of the environment”.

unorganised and had little hope of bettering their conditions. Bent over the machines in the dim light of poorly ventilated quarters, they dared not stop work to talk to her. But Mamie sat down beside them and they told her their woes while they continued stitching³.

Management practices restricted the acquisition of skills. Instead of being trained in all branches of the trade, girls were kept at the “table” system, in which they sewed only one part of a garment - collars or buttonholes, for instance. This prevented them from learning the trade and their lack of skill was used as an excuse to underpay them.

Mamie would have been aware of the gains made in other states, and of the determined campaign waged against sweating in the clothing industry in South Australia, by the group of women who had formed the Working Women’s Trade Union. A Factories Act had been passed in SA in 1894 (the same year that women got the vote in that State), followed by the appointment of the first woman inspector of factories, Mrs Augusta Zadow, a founder of the WWTU, which widely publicised the sweating practices she discovered⁴.

In her campaign, Mamie quoted cases from the Eastern States; for example, in the Newcastle district, of 522 females employed by milliners and dressmakers, 245 so-called “apprentices” received no wages at all, and 60 others were paid three shillings or less per week. An inspector at Goulburn had found children of ten to thirteen years old at work in a cake factory until midnight. One had worked nearly 70 hours for ten shillings, and another 60 hours for seven shillings and sixpence. Sometimes 15 hours were worked in one shift.

Her hand was strengthened by amalgamation with the Tailors’ Union in 1905 to form the Tailors’ and Tailoresses’ Union. She also sought broader support within the labour movement. As a delegate to the Coastal Trades and Labor Council, took up the dreadful conditions of outworkers in the clothing trades. She told Council in 1906 that “owing to the prevalence of sweating in the tailoring trade, good workers were walking about doing nothing because the work was going into the sweating shops”. After the meeting she launched a broadside at the Labor Party saying it “had shamefully neglected the women workers, and now that she had spoken, the members of that Party would not be able to say that they were unaware that sweating was going on in WA⁵”.

At the same time, probably aware of the achievements of the WWTU, Mamie Swanton denounced the sweatshops in public forums. She wrote letter after letter to “The West Australian” with examples of sweating in Perth, NSW and Victoria. A letter in “The West Australian” of 28th July, 1906, signed “A Shirtmaker” was probably organised by her. It complained of average pay of one pound seven shillings and sixpence a week in a skilled trade, and was followed on the 11th August by a letter from Mamie substantiating low pay for

women, another from “One who bitterly regrets going coming to Western Australia, within a week of my confinement, paid twopence ha’penny each for making boy’s shirts with collars and threepence each for making men’s shirts”.

Mamie’s persistent campaign resulted in the matter being taken up in the Legislative Assembly by the Labor Member for Mt Magnet, Mr M F Troy, who on 9th August, 1906, moved that “a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into the alleged existence of sweating in WA industries as a result of the charges and assertions in the press and at public meetings in regard to sweating in industry in Perth and suburbs”. Troy’s speech in the Legislative assembly reads in part:

Assertions had been made in the last two or three years on sweating. If it existed it had escaped the notice of the Chief Inspector of Factories who in his report said it did not exist here in the form found in other countries. But it was admitted that the rate of pay for outworkers was very low. No matter how quick or how clever a worker might be, she could never hope to earn a large wage. It is preeminently the trade of the old, the slow and the inexpert and so was served by unskilled workers when in need. Through hardship, some women had been found working long hours on weekdays and Sundays and yet making only a very poor living. Some are only making fourteen shillings per week, making shirts, trousers, pyjamas, and out of that low wage, are compelled to pay for a room, which cannot be had at less than five shillings per week and to provide her own sewing machine, buy her own cotton and of course her own light⁶.

The only workers that the inspector was in contact with where those in the factories, Mr. Troy said. However, he added:

Sweating is complained of by workers who work outside the factories. The work is done in the homes of the workers. It was well known that there were many persons in Perth earning only 14 shillings a week of 72 hours. When workers have purchased their own machine and cotton and paid for their room, lighting, etc, they must have had very little left to spend on themselves. The real price for shirts, according to the employers was seven pence a piece, but the sweated worker made them for two shillings and sixpence or three shillings a dozen⁷.

The Select Committee established that sweating existed to some degree, but the report was not to be made public on the advice of Crown Law and the Attorney General because there was no protection against legal action. Mr. Troy said the evil had become more prevalent since the committee report owing to the existing depression “and the burden of competition pressing more heavily on the workers”. It existed particularly in the clothing trade, even in a respectable firm like Foy and Gibson. Few were able to approach the Arbitration Court because they had no organisation and the Court would not make an award for workers under sixteen years. The Government Statistician gave the figure of 14 000 in industry generally, 6 000 under the Inspector of Factories. But the rest, including 200 females in the clothing trade, often outworkers in insanitary conditions, were unorganised and were unable to seek redress in the Arbitration Court. One women, whose husband was in the last stages of consumption, worked

in the room where he lay and where their meals were consumed. There was no female inspector. The investigation found Horowitz, a contractor for railway uniforms, was sweating workers⁸.

It was not until 1907, after a continued struggle led by Mamie, that the Arbitration Court granted an award which gave better conditions of apprenticeship, abolished the “table” or “squad” system (in which workers sewed only part of a garment) and fixed a standard wage.

But sweating continued. And so did Mamie’s activities to get justice for this downtrodden section of the population. On 7th June, 1907, writing from 27 Stone Street, West Perth, she took the opportunity to attack both their exploitation, and their stereotyping as women of loose morals, in a letter published in “The West Australian” under the heading “The Sweating Evil”. She said:

having for years persistently dealt with this grave evil as one of the issues of our social system, it is regrettable that I have to treat it in a somewhat personal manner; in reply to J H Wilbur, who “charged our women with immorality with figures based on children born out of wedlock” on a minimum wage of ten shillings a week.

Sir Alexander Peacock, she said, had written to the chairman of the Melbourne Royal Commission asking that the slander be expunged from the records as “an unjust statement against a hardworking body of good women and girls”.

In 1910 Mamie’s long struggle for better conditions for all workers in the clothing trades was recognised in her election to the presidency of the Tailors’ and Tailoresses’ Union. Mamie’s activities were not however confined to the clothing trades. She took part in the movement for women’s votes, being a member of the Women’s Franchise League. In addition, horrified by the working conditions of nurses, she took up their cause and crusaded on health issues, advocating a foundlings’ home and a maternity hospital. A friend of communists Katharine Susannah Pritchard, the writer, and Cecelia Shelley, long-time secretary of the Hotel Club Caterers’ Union, she was a foundation member of the Karrakatta Club. In 1913 she returned to Kalgoorlie and after seven years there returned to Subiaco. Mamie Swanton died on 25th November, 1940 and was buried in the Catholic section of the Rookwood cemetery in Victoria⁹. The “Westralian Worker” of 30th December, 1940 noted her death.

The Invisible Industry of Today

Gradual improvements in the industry took place following the making of the award in 1907. As far back as 1933 an attempt was made to protect outworkers in the Award, without success. By 1947, however, all workers and employers in the “legitimate” clothing industry in WA were

covered by the Industrial Commission, and in 1973 the 1972 award was amended to cover minimum pay for outworkers. In handing down this decision, Mr Commissioner D E Cort said:

For many years provisions to protect out workers from the danger of exploitation have featured in awards covering the clothing industry. Award Nos. 6,7,8,9 and 10 of 1933 contained such a provision . . . A union representative should, and has been, granted a reasonable right of entry . . . employers should endeavour at all times to progressively improve the conditions under which employees are required to work. Lighting, the covering of concrete floors, dining and toilet accommodation, seating, rest rooms and the like if to a high standard are likely to improve relationships between employer and employee and production and should receive continual attention of all employers¹⁰.

These are the matters that are being evaded by sub-contractors practising “sweating” today.

Nearly twenty years after Commi[j]ssioner Cort’s decision, and over eighty years after Mamie’s fiery campaign, Commissioner S A Kennedy noted the increasing evidence of outwork and avoidance of the minimum terms and conditions of the WA Award. In her 1990 decision in the WA Industrial Relations Commission on an application by the WA Clothing and Allied Trades Union designed to tighten up the award provisions for outworkers, Commissioner Kennedy said that the evidence was that general conditions applying to outwork were often substandard and the incidence of this was probably increasing overall as the industry itself contracted and employment declined¹¹. Deciding in favour of the union application, she summed up the history of attempts to regulate outwork and noted the union submission that outwork was “significantly subject to unreasonable practices which operate against the proper interests of employees”. It was probable, she said, that a significant proportion of the outworkers were women and a high proportion of these of a non-English-speaking background, particularly Vietnamese, with little knowledge of their award rights¹².

The years prior to the WA Commission’s 1990 decision had seen massive changes in the industry, changes wrought by the globalisation of production in the industry, and altered industry policy in Australia. Between 1977/78 and 1983/84 there was clear evidence of an explosion of outwork or “the invisible individual” in the clothing industry, according to a 1988/89 report of the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Development Authority. Many workers had gone from visible to invisible industry, rather than be redeployed or unemployed. Even an employer referred to the “socially reprehensible conditions” of outworkers, who told him that they worked half as long again, for half the money. Conditions in the 1990s are worse than those experienced by garment workers 100 years ago. Nationally, the number of outworkers in the clothing industry in 1995 far exceeded the number of factory-based workers in the industry. The NCFUA estimated that there were as many as 300 000 outworkers in the clothing industry Australia-wide. Outworkers toil in appalling places of work, averaging 14 to

18 hours a day, almost all working seven days a week and receiving on average \$2.50 per hour. Mainly women from non-English-speaking backgrounds, they work in isolation, so are less visible and thus more open to exploitation¹³. The national union concluded that outwork is not only a characteristic of the clothing industry in Australia, but that the industry is structured around it¹⁴.

Several factors have contributed to the creation and increased use of this underclass of workers, especially the policies of the Hawke/Keating governments, most particularly the reduction in tariffs and subsequent restructuring processes in the industry, including Industries Assistance Commission recommendations and negotiations under the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT).¹⁵ Many Australian-based clothing manufacturers have moved offshore or have sought out the most compliant workforce at the lowest cost. Increased retail monopolisation in Australia has allowed the major firms that control the market to dictate pricing policy, creating a situation where they are supplied with local products for third world wages. Twenty years ago there was little outwork in WA, according to Ruth Geneff, Secretary of the TCFUA in this State¹⁶.

However, since the changes referred to, rather than find a way to keep their door open by changing their product to compete with cheap imports, employers have turned to cost cutting on the labour involved on making garments. The turn to workers outside the factory means that besides not getting the same wages as those working within the factory system, they are missing out on superannuation, workers' compensation, long service leave - the hard-won benefits of earlier struggles - and in their old age will be unable to stop work. The industrial benefits that were obtained in the late 1980s are often unknown to the workers; Ruth Geneff speaks of "barriers which trapped outworkers and enslaved them", that "when they got work, they typically worked 12 to 18 hours a day, seven days a week, for about a third of the award rate of pay, with no access to even the minimum conditions of factory workers¹⁷".

As the migration pattern has changed, so has employment in the clothing industry. Twenty years ago, most factories employed migrants from Europe. But the recent wave of immigration has seen movement of employment in the industry away from Australian/European to Vietnamese/Asian. The most recent migrants are the most exploited. Despite the efforts of the union, Vietnamese workers fear that if they join they will lose their job. Social factors interact with work organisation to further exploit workers. "Middlemen", often migrants themselves, may play an important role, buying unmade garments from the main contractor, then selling back the finished garments. Migrants and refugees frightened of officialdom are threatened with deportation by unscrupulous contractors. Those already getting Social Security are scared of prosecution for money not declared in the burgeoning cash economy, and are vulnerable to blackmail. Some young Vietnamese women who work by day in factories that come under the

Occupational Safety and Health Act become “home workers” after their daytime hours finish, and work until 2 am and at weekends.

WA examples quoted by officials of the TCFUA show the intensity of exploitation in the underground industry that is going on in suburban home “factories” under subcontractors is much the same as in the eastern States. Home workers get a pittance for making smart label children’s clothes that are eventually sold at a big profit over the counters of big retailers, or T-shirts at prices low enough to compete with products from cheap labour countries. Garments that cost 50 cents to make are sold for \$15. Mostly women, these outworkers are struggling to help their families with a secondary income. The contractor, by giving work out, passes on to them the cost of equipment, lighting, heating, and health and safety measures, plus the occupational hazards of working at home. Union organisers have gone into homes where “high tech” machines leave no room for furniture.

Examples from WA TCFUA officials include an instance in Balga where half a dozen machines were seen on a verandah with school-aged children working them. The two storey suburban building was like a big factory at the back, with six machines, a bander, an overlocker, etc. Children were reported to be working until 2 am. If the union stakes out a place or a council inspector appears, the workers scurry out like rabbits and sit in cars until the danger is past¹⁸. Children will often start work at 5 am and resume at 4 pm after school.

All the evidence points to the existence of sweated clothing workers in the 1990s, mainly women, particularly migrant women and their children, who are enduring exploitation again labelled “slavery” - the same kind that Mamie Swanton fought against so valiantly at the beginning of the century with her battle cry, “There are white slaves in the West!”

¹ Grahame, Edna (ed) *Australian Dictionary of Biography* Vol. 12, 1891-1939, p.148.

² Mamie’s papers in the Mitchell Library in Sydney include a book of Mamie’s notes and cuttings of her letters, that was lent to me in the 1960s by the WA branch of the Union of Australian Women, and was returned to their original holder, a Collie woman. I have had to rely on some of my own memories of relevant information.

³ Mamie Swanton’s letters to “The West Australian”, 7th June 1906 to 27th August, 1907.

⁴ SA Occupational Health and Safety Unit Bulletin, April 1994.

⁵ Address to Coastal Districts Labor Council by Mamie Swanton, 1906.

⁶ Parliamentary Papers, 8th August, 1906.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Grahame, op cit.

¹⁰ Western Australian Industrial Gazette: 4th July, 1973 (Application No. 16 of 1972).

¹¹ Western Australian Industrial Gazette: 30th November, 1990 (Application No. 1470 of 1987).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ “The Guardian”, Sydney, 15th November, 1995.

¹⁴ TCFUA (1995) “The Hidden Cost of Fashion”.

¹⁵ see the article by Shona Zulsdorf in this issue.

¹⁶ Interview with Ruth Geneff, Secretary, WA Branch, Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia, November, 1994.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Interview with Kath Mallott, former organiser, WA Branch, Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia, November, 1994.

Political Unionism and the TCF Sector¹

Shona Zulsdorf*

Australian governments must balance competing objectives of developing a viable export-oriented economy against employment provided by protected import-replacement industries that are sustained by a limited domestic market. The Textile, Clothing and Footwear (TCF) sector has been one policy area that exemplifies the problems for any government in attempting to reconcile contradictory objectives and contend with the consequent repercussions for workers and business. The contraction of the TCF sector has occurred at a time when the Australian trade union movement endorsed a strategy of political unionism and sought to play an active role in the formation of economic policy. This paper will draw some tentative conclusions as to whether political unionism can be a successful strategy for an industry operating within a declining sector and the repercussions for a trade union representing workers in the sector. A comparison can be undertaken within the sector with textile industries, which have fared significantly better than clothing and footwear companies, and this may give some indication of the criteria on which government assistance is provided to industry.

The TCF sector incorporates a diverse array of industries that serve the international and domestic market. Production covers the full spectrum from processing raw materials with low value-adding to finished products for retail sale. The revenue generated from employment forms the basis of many regional economies located in marginal electorates which further compounds the dilemma of providing government support for these industries. Workers in TCF industries constituted approximately 10% of the total manufacturing workforce throughout the 1980s.² Women comprised 75% of the total workforce in the Clothing and Footwear industry and a slightly lower figure of 64% for the sector as a whole.³ The industry tends to employ workers that are predominantly female, many of whom are married and/or migrant women with little or no technical or formal education. Due to the location of these industries and the number of married women employed by them, geographic mobility of the workforce is limited and constricts the opportunities to find alternative employment.⁴

The nature of work in the TCF sector exemplifies the trend towards the creation of core and peripheral workforces in capitalist societies. White-collar, full-time, skilled and permanent workers constitute the core workforce. The peripheral workforce operates as a dichotomy based on blue-collar, part-time, unskilled and casual workers.

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For many women, paid employment conforms to that of the peripheral workforce where women perform unskilled, casual and part-time work. In aggregate terms, women earn less than men and women are more likely to occupy positions with more restricted opportunities for promotion.

Statistics on workforce participation provides credence to this position as women constitute 85% of part-time workers and women in full-time work earn 83% of that of their male counterparts.⁵ Gender segregation in the structure of work is further reinforced under a strategy of political unionism with the increasing polarisation between core and peripheral industries.

The benefits from political unionism are such that they are not distributed evenly for workers. While workers in some sectors are better able to benefit from political unionism, others are actively disadvantaged by it. This division is between core and peripheral industries which corresponds to a division based on gender. Consensual decision-making within corporatist arrangements is better able to deliver benefits for workers whereas the disintegration of a tripartite agreement can lead to devastating consequences for some sectors of industry and particularly those that employ women.

The Australian trade union movement has actively pursued a strategy of political unionism over the last decade. Political unionism is an extension of notions of corporatism. Gwynneth Singleton has defined corporatism as a “tripartite system between government, business and unions that is characterised by consensus, with equal influence on policy”.⁶ The incorporation of organised labour into a corporatist agreement “lies in the logic of an ascendant union movement to spread its operations out from struggles at the point of production into the political arena”;⁷ that is, shifting union activity from the shopfloor level to becoming an integral part of the political policy-making process. The shift in the site of class conflict from the industrial to the political arena seeks to redefine the role of trade unions with the expectation that political unionism can achieve a multiplicity of objectives by creating:

a potential for industrial action which will go beyond the narrow traditional union demands for improved wages and conditions. [T]here is more possibility for...workers extending their demands into areas of policy making power hitherto the sacred terrain of employers...in work organisation, investment policy, production goals and so on.⁸

Korpi’s ideal of political unionism, outlined in the previous quote, is supported by social-democratic theorists who have also been strong advocates of this strategy. Social-democrats argue that labour, while subordinate to capital, may extract benefits through an agenda that seeks to achieve objectives that benefit both business and workers. One such theorist, Colin Crouch, defends corporatist structures on the basis that “active union intervention in the corporatist incomes policy structure is the only way of advancing workers’ interests”.⁹ The

justification for this strategy is that the labour movement is unable "to control the *level* of economic activity without being involved in decisions concerning its *content*" (original emphasis).¹⁰ In this way, the union movement extends its objectives beyond that of a struggle over wages and working conditions to establishing its hegemony over economic policy.

Social-democratic theories are embedded in Marxist notions on the inherently conflictual social relations of capital. Goldthorpe challenges the Marxist assumptions of the social-democratic theorists and contends that corporatism is consistent with the post-war settlements between government, business and unions. These agreements were ratified by sectional groups as they believed that there could be an interdependence of interests between business and workers if the government supported their policies with the added benefit that the government could also achieve its objectives.¹¹

The potential for a class compromise allows for a form of "democratic corporatism" to operate within the economic dictates of supply-side economics. Katzenstein's model of democratic corporatism is specifically applied to small states that are financially dependent on exports and achieving economies of scale in the production of commodities. Government support is provided by compensating for the costs of structural adjustment in maintaining a viable export sector.¹² Democratic corporatism is defined by three factors: a social partnership between capital and labour at a national level, centralised interest groups, and voluntary arrangements of interest intermediation.¹³ This form of corporatism has two variants: social and liberal corporatism. Liberal corporatism compensates for the deleterious effects of market forces with political compensation to those sectors of industry affected by structural adjustment in order to maintain consensus between government, business and unions. Social corporatism provides compensation in such a way that market forces are not distorted. Therefore, liberal corporatism is the political intervention in markets while social corporatism is the political toleration of market outcomes. Both models accept the logic of markets based on the axioms of neo-classical economics on economic growth in conjunction with achieving political legitimacy through domestic compensation.

In industrialised countries, governments have invariably attempted to establish tripartite consensus so that the state can counter economic crises within a domestic economy. While Katzenstein and Goldthorpe see an inclusionary strategy such as corporatism as a means of managing crises in capitalist societies, Streeck argues that economic decline is also conducive to an exclusionary strategy of dualism. Dualism operates in an arena where the government establishes the parameters and institutional context in which business can operate unhindered. This dualism is economic in nature as there is no direct attack on organised interests; rather, the government sanctions the primacy of market forces in certain areas of the economy which has repercussions on the associated relations of authority and control.¹⁴ It is important to note,

however, that dualism and corporatism are not mutually exclusive strategies; they can co-exist. Dualism is typified by an increasing segmentation of the labour market with core and peripheral workforces. The analogy can be applied to industry with a polarisation between industries in terms of the levels of government support. It cannot be said that groups not included in corporatist arrangements will demonstrate dualistic tendencies, but the exclusion of select groups and their commensurate lack of bargaining strength makes them particularly vulnerable to dualism.

The following empirical analysis will seek to determine whether policies pertaining to the TCF sector conformed to the social or liberal variant of corporatism as defined by Katzenstein. The significance of Katzenstein's categorisation of corporatism is the link between corporatism and dualism and whether the form of corporatism that operated in Australia gave rise to dualism in industry development with core and peripheral sectors of industry. Therefore, it will be necessary to establish if tripartism was an essential element in determining policy, to what degree there was government intervention in the allocation of resources to TCF industries, and to what extent market forces were allowed to operate unhindered. For the union movement, a critical criterion is the comparison of the number of jobs created or lost in the sector, and the effects of job creation or job losses on levels of union membership.

History Of Government Support

The longevity of the TCF sector can be attributed to the protectionist mantle of tariffs and quotas. Local industry was only threatened from cheap imports when the Whitlam Government reduced tariff levels in 1973.¹⁵ To minimise the electoral liability of job losses, factory closures and a lack of business confidence, the Fraser Government announced a three year plan for the sector (which was later extended for another 12 months). He resorted to traditional measures of extending global import quotas on a broad range of TCF imports and increasing tariffs on clothing and footwear to a massive 200% by 1981/2.¹⁶

The original TCF plan (known as the Lynch Plan), while having been endorsed by the ALP, was in actuality an initiative of the Fraser government. It included the following provisions: the retention of global quotas on most apparel and footwear, tariff quotas for certain fabric and textile products, bounties for yarn production and fabric printing, government subsidies paid as a percentage of production costs, and duty-free entry for some fabrics. A commitment was made to establish a "reasonably predictable policy environment within which industry could plan investment and marketing decisions with greater confidence".¹⁷ Despite this, industry and unions did not welcome any attempts at reforms that could result in restructuring, rationalisation, and redundancies within the sector.¹⁸ While industry was muted in its opposition, the unions were openly critical of any attempts to rationalise the industry.¹⁹ Despite the reservations of business and unions, a modicum of tripartite consensus was established in

the face of limited alternatives other than reduced levels of protection as consistently advocated by the Industries Assistance Commission (IAC). The net effect was to establish a system of quotas that was based on volume rather than value and it became more economical for expensive items to be imported while local producers competed for market share in labour-intensive industries where sales were predominantly based on cost factors. A protected domestic market ensured that employment levels within the sector remained static, albeit at the consumer's expense. Unfortunately, the plan did not encourage diversification into areas of production more suited to Australia.²⁰

Changes In Government Policy

In 1984, the IAC reviewed assistance measures for TCF industries and made recommendations for a strategy to supersede the existing plan when it concluded in 1988. The IAC outlined four proposals, with a preferred policy option of an incremental reduction in tariffs to 50% over a seven-year period until their abolition in 1996. The most radical proposal was for a reduction in tariffs to a level of 30%. The Commission considered it unnecessary to have a monitoring agency to supervise the process or assess its impact and also rejected the need for any complementary assistance measures.²¹

The IAC acknowledged that the proposals would lead to a general contraction of industries and jobs within the sector with the justification that domestic economic growth was the product of an export-led growth, which was consistent with mainstream economic orthodoxy. The IAC maintained that the narrow focus of protecting specific interest groups and the use of barriers on imports would not stimulate local industry to become more efficient or export oriented. TCF industries should not be entitled to preferential treatment by government but cater to niche markets based on quality and quick response, adopt latest technology, and maximise export opportunities.²²

The principal employer association, the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Council of Australia (TCFCA), was critical of the IAC's position on industry assistance stating that the minimum that the industry could sustain was a reduction in tariffs to 75%, which would maintain the tariff quota system. The TCFCA predicted that the 50% option would mean the total absence of quotas and lead to the complete destruction of TCF manufacturing within Australia.²³ Similarly, the Clothing and Allied Trades Union (CATU) supported the existing arrangements and no reduction in tariff levels below 75% - although the union stated that automatic quota expansion should be abolished and not maintained as recommended by the TCFCA. In its submission, CATU supported the notion of "market growth equally between domestic production and imports".²⁴ Members of the Australian Manufacturing Council's (AMC's) tripartite TCF Industry Council conceded that there were structural problems that needed to be addressed, but agreement in principle or even in general terms eluded the Council.²⁵ There was also conflict

within government on the policy option that should be adopted. While John Button, as Minister representing the Department of Industry, Technology and Commerce (DITAC), and the IAC wanted the more gradual reduction in tariffs offered by the 50% option, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PMC) - and particularly Ross Garnaut - preferred the 30% option. Despite Button's opposition to PMC's preference for the 30% option, it proved to be advantageous in that Button was better able to manoeuvre and negotiate with the union movement and business.

Given these political and economic constraints, the unions in the sector instigated a number of reforms. The TCF unions had traditionally supported protectionism despite the disproportionate benefits for business.²⁶ This position was challenged when late in 1985, CATU constructed a plan which was designed to alter the underlying structure of industry without relying on protection. The proposals included a phased reduction in protection, labour-adjustment schemes, development agreements, a monitoring authority, positive assistance measures and investment plans.²⁷ The TCF unions sought to establish a policy position that maintained a commonality of objectives with business and government but also represented the interests of their members. In 1986, the Federal Council of the TCF Unions acknowledged the economic realities of the 1980s and endorsed a "change to more technologically efficient industries, with improved productivity, economic efficiency and international competitiveness".²⁸

Moves were also undertaken to consolidate union power through amalgamation to pursue this new agenda. Despite past resistance, by 1987 there was a general acceptance of the need for amalgamation when the Amalgamated Footwear and Textile Workers' Union (AF&TWU) was formed, combining the Australian Textile Workers' Union (ATWU) and the Boot Trades' Federation. Further amalgamation between the AF&TWU and CATU was finalised in 1992. The TCF Unions' Federation was also established to oversee the Plan and the union amalgamations under the direction of Anna Booth. It remained to be seen if these reforms did increase the effective influence of the TCF unions.

In 1987, Button announced the TCF Plan to begin in March 1989. A differential system of tariffs was to be established with reductions to 60% for clothing, 50% for footwear and 40% for textiles. Before the Plan began, changes were announced in the *May Economic Statement* in 1988 which accelerated tariff reductions. Within-quota tariffs would now be reduced on clothing, footwear and textiles to 55%, 45% and 35% respectively. The removal of quotas would be fast-tracked to end on 1 July 1995, eight months earlier than previously intended.²⁹ The unions warned that under the post-1988 Plan, business would cease further investment in the sector and the credibility of the Federal Labor Government would be irreparably damaged among unions and workers.³⁰ According to the unions, what was required were "phased

reductions in protection, positive assistance measures and special assistance for retrenched workers".³¹

The government did make a number of concessions to union demands by agreeing to a mid-term review and a safety net stating that it would revise the plan if TCF production fell by more than 15%.³² The final plan also included a \$200m development scheme which provided positive measures to alleviate structural adjustment pressures, a labour adjustment program of \$90m for motor vehicle and TCF workers and a monitoring agency.³³ Monitoring was to be the responsibility of the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Development Authority (TCFDA) which was an independent body appointed "to ensure that the objectives of the government in relation to these industries were achieved".³⁴

Economic imperatives were driving structural reforms of the TCF sector with the differential support for export over import-replacement industries. The policy shift that occurred after 1987 was enunciated by the then-Treasurer in May 1988 where he stated that:

The way forward for Australia is not to be closeted and sheltered, but to be open and dynamic, trading aggressively in the world. Only this kind of economy can provide the employment and rising living standards that Australians aspire to.³⁵

Recommendations and refinements to the Post-1988 TCF Plan embodied this emergent economic ideology. The increased exposure of the TCF sector to market forces led to concerns over the rate of restructuring which prompted the government to commission the *State of the Industry Report 1990* which was conducted by the TCFDA.³⁶ Within the report, the prediction was made that textile industries would fare significantly better than clothing and footwear industries. This disparity was due to the nature of the industries themselves. Clothing and footwear products were made in labour-intensive processes and were unlikely to become internationally competitive. By contrast, textile production often incorporated more capital-intensive, technologically-advanced, processes in the value-adding of raw materials. This emphasis on downstream processing for export markets was considered a preferential competitive advantage to the limited growth potential of clothing and footwear industries.³⁷

The authors of the Report attributed the decline in levels of investment to the "wider downturn in the economy" and not as a consequence of the Plan³⁸ and the government endorsed this assessment.³⁹ Industry was still predominantly catering to the domestic market and was not sufficiently oriented towards export markets and therefore protection levels were above the threshold required to further rationalise uncompetitive industries. Based on the findings of the report, the government announced further changes to the Plan.⁴⁰ To this end, reductions in tariff levels were to be further accelerated to levels of 25% for clothing and 15% for footwear and textiles by the year 2000. Quotas were to be abolished two years earlier than originally

intended on 1 March 1993 and bounties were to be phased out by 1995. The government also retracted its commitment to a safety net and a mid-term review.⁴¹

These changes were not the product of consensual agreements conducted within tripartite forums. Industry Councils had originally been established to "help co-ordinate industry activity and promote co-operation between employers and employees" within respective industries.⁴² Business and trade union participation in these councils was considered an integral element in policy formation. The TCF Industry Council had been abolished in June 1988 when the TCFDA was established. Unlike the TCF Industry Council, the Authority created schisms between business and unions, preferring bipartite consultations. Excluding one party in negotiations ultimately alienated both business and unions. Business and unions held the belief that the Authority had a clear vision of its mandate and the policies necessary to achieve the objectives of government and consultation was a mere formality.⁴³ By 1991, when the government announced further changes to the Plan, unions and business were not even consulted.

Repercussions Of Policy Change

The condemnation by business of the post-1988 Plan was, inevitably, couched in the understated rhetoric of conservatism. The Annual Report released by the TCFCA, despite its generally critical stance on government policy, merely stated that it was "disappointed" with the current policy as it pertained to import quotas and tariffs, and, it was not a "prudent" policy to pursue. The Council did concede that "without a firmer approach by Government to these issues Australian manufacturing faces an uphill task".⁴⁴ According to the TCFCA, what was required was strict trade management that would have the effect of "renew[ing] investor confidence [and] encouraging new investment".⁴⁵ It was the actions of business that belied their rhetoric on the post-1988 Plan. As predicted by the unions, business did indeed substantially reduce investment in the sector - despite the assistance schemes available. Under the Raw Materials Processing scheme, no businesses took up the equity option. The threat of further cutbacks in tariffs made business reluctant to invest in technology under the Textile Industry Modernisation Scheme (TIMS) option as well. Under the International Competitiveness Scheme, assistance had been predominantly directed into labour-saving schemes rather than new technology. One of the objectives of the Plan was to ensure certainty on which to base investment decisions and to this end the government had promised not to implement further changes.⁴⁶ Contrary to this commitment, the government consistently reduced tariffs, underlining the concerns of business.

There was a reduction in investment for the manufacturing sector as a whole of 11.8% for the twelve month period from 1987/8. Even taking this over a 48 month period, the decline was just under 20%. In contrast, the fall in investment in capital goods for TCF industries was

53%.⁴⁷ The TCFDA attributed the fall in investment to the economic downturn; but it does not adequately account for a fall of this magnitude. It must be conceded though, that it is feasible that the contraction in the sector was as a result of the recession and not attributable to the sectoral plans. To assess the accuracy of this claim, it is necessary to conduct a simple comparative analysis that indicates whether the economy or levels of government assistance have the greater impact on industry development. To this end, TCF investment will be compared against that of total manufacturing which demonstrates if the effects of the recession were felt equally throughout manufacturing industries. To further establish if the decline in investment was a result of the sectoral plans and not the recession, a comparison will be conducted between the levels of investment during the recession of 1981/2 when the Lynch Plan was implemented against the 1989/90 recession under the revised Plan.

From 1981/2 to 1982/3 there was a reduction in investment in TCF industries of 18.07% whereas the fall in investment for total manufacturing was 9.9%. TCF industries suffered a fall 1.8 times that of the manufacturing sector as a whole. In 1989/90, the fall in TCF investment was 4.4 times higher than that of total manufacturing. From the nadir of the recession in 1982 under the Lynch Plan, investment in capital goods rose steadily. Under the post-1988 Plan, investment levels by 1992/3 were still 44% lower than in 1989/90.⁴⁸

Funds were directed into capital-intensive investment during the recession in 1982/3 while this was not the case in 1989/90. Falling levels of investment in the TCF sector was not consistent with that of manufacturing industries in general. While it must be conceded that it was no longer economically viable to compete with low-wage countries in industries that were labour intensive, business continued to invest when financial concessions were provided by the state.

While import penetration fell during the 1982/3 recession, this trend was reversed during the recession of 1989/90. Clothing and footwear were particularly vulnerable to import penetration and this trend could be identified throughout the 1980s, while exports in these industries remained at pre-depreciation levels. This can be contrasted with the textile industry where, despite increasing import penetration, there has been a commensurate increase in export propensity.⁴⁹ A differential system had been established that rationalised uncompetitive industries in clothing and footwear production with the limited expansion of textile industries that produce for the export market.

The changing economic and political environment has had devastating consequences for the union movement. The most immediate effect was on levels of employment. From 1982/3 to 1987/8 there was an increase in employment from 102,400 to 108,900 workers, a rise of 6.3 percent.⁵⁰ From 1987/8 to 1991/2, there was a substantial fall in workers employed in the sector to 76,400, a decline of 29.8 percent.⁵¹ In the twelve months to the end of 1992,

employment decreased by a further 12%. Employment did not decline equally throughout the sector. While the number of employees in textile industries remained relatively stable in 1991/2, employment in clothing industries fell by a massive 22%.⁵² The greatest reduction in employment in the footwear industry occurred in 1989/90 when a significant proportion of production was shifted offshore. Employment declined by 3,000 to 9,000 workers at that time and has remained relatively stable since the earlier rationalisation of footwear industries.⁵³ The Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia (TCFUA) was critical of job losses as it contended that those workers who had been retrenched from within the sector would remain unemployed due to the "inability of the economy to absorb those people so displaced".⁵⁴

Levels of Employment in TCF Industries
(,000s)

	1985/6	1986/7	1987/8	1988/9	1989/9	1990/1	1991/2
T ^a	31.3	32.0	34.7	31.1	32.0	27.0	26.0
C ^b	61.3	62.2	57.3	58.8	52.7	46.9	43.4
F ^c	12.0	13.0	12.0	12.0	9.0	7.0	6.6
TCF ^d	105.0	107.0	104.0	102.0	94.0	80.9	76.0

Notes: (a) T - Textiles
(b) C - Clothing
(c) F - Footwear
(d) TCF - Textile, Clothing and Footwear

Source: ABS. Survey of Wage and Salary Earners, Cat. No. 6248.0, various years.

Inevitably, this decline has had consequences for union membership. From 1981 to 1989, union membership of textile workers was slowing declining and over the whole period there was a fall of 9.6%. This can be contrasted with a 27.5% fall for textile workers in only 3 years from 1989 to 1992. Union membership for the footwear division remained relatively stable from 1987 to 1990, but then membership numbers fell by about one-third between 1990 and 1992. While statistics are not available for the clothing division, it would seem reasonable to assume that the figures for these industries would follow the trend of textile and footwear workers.⁵⁵

A fall in the number of workers in an industry will inevitably result in declining union membership. What is also evident is that workers are reluctant to maintain membership in what is perceived as a declining sector and one that is unlikely to become viable even with a proactive union leadership such as that of the TCFUA.

Conclusion

The 1980s saw the evolution of a new economic paradigm for the government that gave primacy to export over import-replacement industries. Neo-classical economic principles were assimilated into the Government's agenda, and Treasury's desire for an "unparalleled expansion of exports to finance the expanded import dependence" in sectors such as TCF became accepted practice.⁵⁶ The government's previous support for import-replacement allowed for a plan to be implemented that ensured investment by business and the maintenance of jobs for workers. In the post-1988 era, the fragile consensus previously established began to disintegrate. Business and unions were excluded from tripartite forums and the policies were imposed rather than negotiated. The government reduced financial support for the sector and without assurances of a stable environment in which to invest, business did not expand production in the sector. The sector experienced substantial job losses which in turn resulted in declining union membership, undermining the political power of TCF unions. The development of an internationally viable industrial base, while anticipating job growth in the long term, took precedence over maintaining current levels of employment. Consensus based on parity between export and import-replacement industries established a framework on which a commonality of objectives could be framed between government, business and unions. The consensus that could be identified up until 1987 disintegrated in the face of economic policies which could not be constructed in positive-sum terms.

In a declining sector, there is the potential for a union of interests between capital and labour but this is, in itself, insufficient to ensure the commercial viability of an industry when there is a reliance on an interventionist role by government. The case study of TCF industries demonstrates that when the state withdrew its support, signifying the end of tripartite consensus, the sector could not survive. It is only when labour is supported by capital and the state, as demonstrated in the pre-1987 period, that union objectives of increased levels or the maintenance of current levels of employment can be achieved. Therefore, within a corporatist arrangement, the jobs of TCF workers were protected which was in contrast to the situation in the post 1987 period when the Government no longer supported the sector.

As the state withdraws from a tripartite relationship; a declining sector is vulnerable to operating subject to market forces. The differential treatment of textile industries against clothing and footwear industries reveals the changing priorities of government objectives while business support is demonstrated through levels of investment. Government intervention was limited to key industries leaving internationally uncompetitive industries to suffer the negative consequences of the free market. The rationalisation of industries conforms to the social corporatism defined by Katzenstein. Extending his framework of corporatism in small states is the operation of dualism within sectors subject to deregulation by the state with the primacy of economic efficiency over social objectives of equity. Thus, for internationally uncompetitive

industries, the differential treatment by government precipitated uneven industry development and the emergence of core and peripheral industries.

- 1 Thank you to Alan Fenna, Frank Reid and Narelle Miragliotta for their useful comments. I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of the National Tertiary Education Industry Union which has provided financial support for this project.
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Typhoid, Flies and Pond's Cream: Interview with Nora Johnson

Diane Machado and Alexander Botelho-Machado*

Interested historians can still gain access to the outpost history of Western Australia through tapping the memories of participants in the development of the Australian goldfields. In 1929 Nora Johnston was a 20 year old nurse just out from England. Not able to find a job because of the depression in Australia, Nora sought work at Wiluna on the Western Goldfields. Travelling by truck and donkey team she found hessian walls, hurricane lamps, and a pervasive rash from the sulphur used to extract the gold.

Nora: It was the depression in 1929. Nobody could get work and to practice here I had to get an Australian certificate. So I put my name down at Freo [Fremantle Hospital]. There was an 18 month waiting list. I went children's nursing but I don't have much patience, and my sister said of a friend who was in Wiluna, she never stayed anywhere more than a few weeks but she had been there three months, so it must be lovely. No one on this earth could tell me anything about Wiluna, not even the station master.

I wrote, and they said to come on the train to Meekatharra or Leonora and a car would meet me. I was thinking I would be going five minutes up the road. Two hundred miles later on I was in a truck (which used to go every three or four weeks or something, apart from that it was donkey teams) and on top of it was everything you could possibly think of, including six drunks. Before I got there, everyone was sorry for this naive little Pom who didn't know where she was going.

One of the men (commercial travellers) said, "I think I will take you to the hotel", which was very nice, and I asked if I could have tea and toast.

"Sausage and eggs, chips and eggs."

"I want tea and toast."

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“You will have to pay,” she said.

“I want a room.”

“What for?”

“To sleep. My car will be here at 2:00 pm.” And I asked for a bath. That was the last thing to ask for.

“Why?”

“The copper isn’t on!”

“What?”

“Only on a Monday when the copper is on.”

“Could I have a shower?” By now I was well trained to showers under the windows freezing you to death. Cap and bag and off I trotted and about half an hour later, there was a shower. Just got into bed, and bang at the door. There to clean the room. I said, “I am going to sleep.” “It’s my day to do the room.” The room was spotless. So I said, “You will have to work around me, as I am staying in bed.” I left word to call me for lunch. At 2:00 pm there was a hammering on the door, “Your car is here.” I said, “I haven’t had any lunch.” She said, “You won’t be having any now, everything is locked up. Why didn’t you leave word?” I said I did, with the housemaid. “She has gone. Hurry up, get your clothes on. The car’s waiting.”

All I could see was this great big truck. I looked at the truck driver - to this day I would swear he was seven foot tall. He was a cross-eyed native. In England natives were not allowed to ride in trams. They rode on the step.

“I can’t go with him, he’s a nigger,” I said. He didn’t say a word.

I have never forgotten that. I apologised to him later. He was the most charming person I ever met when I got to know him. Anyway, we got there in the middle of the night, not a light anywhere. I was a city person. He said, “Here you are.” I said, “You were supposed to take me to the hospital.” He said, “It’s there, behind you.” Off loaded my trunk, and off he went.

All I could see was pitch blackness. All I could see was what looked like a shed. Coming up, we had called in at a bush boarding house where the men from the railway used to eat. Consternation there, so I had to go outside and they got on with their meal. Apart from that I hadn't seen a thing, apart from goannas and sheep and the bush, cut down for cattle feed. Even the roads went through creeks, it was only a camel track, not a road.

So I got there and stood there and looked in dismay. There were piles and piles of washing everywhere waiting to be folded. In the far corner was a hurricane lamp. The glass was so smoky, I don't know how anyone could read by it. A nurse must have realised someone was standing there.

"Didn't expect you. You were supposed to come yesterday. We decided you weren't coming and had changed your mind," she said.

"If I had known what I was coming to I might have changed my mind!" I replied.

Next thing, there was matron doing a Florence Nightingale with a lamp in her hand. She took me across the paddock, and I came to a whitewashed shed, corrugated iron, inside and out and opened the door. Black bedstead, chair with a bowl of water and that was it. No curtains. I said, "I would appreciate a cup of tea and a sandwich."

"Oh. I will boil you an egg."

There was a terrible noise in the kitchen. Apparently she was trying to get a very temperamental primus stove going. So I got my cup of tea and egg and went to bed.

The next morning, there was this one room with a doorway, and as you looked across very drunken looking wooden hutches, which I was told were coolers, and in there all food and drugs were kept. Much to my surprise, they kept very well. The floor was packed earth with lino, and in the corner was a relieving doctor. She was an English woman, a marvellous person, who had been here some years. In this room all there was were two coolers and a door into the ward and to Matron. Also down there was a dispensary with outpatients. It was just hessian and board, iron stoves and one or two patients. There was only a bush nursing station for years.

Our living quarters, our shed room as I used to call it, had a table down the centre of it and there was something stuck up on the ceiling and I didn't know what it was. It was a net to eat under.

Diane: What do you mean, sit under a net to eat your food?

Nora: Well, this net had to be draped over you when the food was put on the table, and you had to sit under that to eat. I couldn't sit under the net, it used to choke me. So I used to eat outside. Of course, I would lose my meal because the flies were just waiting to eat it. They used to say to me to have a glass of beer and then you will eat your food. I don't like alcohol. I just don't like it, but the other nurse used to have a glass of beer before her meal. Oh, the flies were shocking. There was big trouble with the flies and with the children in particular.

Diane: What sort of food did you have up there?

Nora: It all depended on the cook how good the food was, and how much you had, because of course the cooks drifted around. At one time there were three of us and one or two of the patients, because we didn't have a lot of patients before the mine accidents started coming. You see the cook had six pounds of butter and six dozen eggs and there were only three or four of us there. The cook was feeding her family, but then we got another one, and she was a real battleaxe! We would have hot scones or Anzac biscuits or rock cakes on alternate days. The men used to love coming over at tea time. There was a lot of tinned fruit, but it was good depending on the cook and what they could do with it. This last one, she could do wonders with nothing. She really could.

Diane: What about the mine?

Nora: The mine had only just opened after being closed for 30 years. It was a gold mine, which had closed 30 years before, but with new methods, the tailings could be recycled. It was a good mine, but more sulphur came out than gold. Men got rash. They were in a shocking state, nothing would ease it. Every drop of calamine lotion was used. I suggested they wore women's bloomers, I mean proper women's bloomers and they were horrified! One man tried it and got a bit of relief, but still no headway. I said to doctor in desperation, "Try Pond's Cold Cream." That's what cured it, Pond's Cold Cream. They bought all they could lay their hands on, and all the women's bloomers too!

Diane: Did the mine keep the hospital busy with accidents?

Nora: Every day there would be an accident at the mines. Most accident victims were placed on a truck and taken 120 miles to Meekatharra. All we treated were football injuries and such things, and nearly all were really middle aged farmers. The only place to work was Wiluna and there was good money there. Their wives and children were running the farms so they

wouldn't be repossessed. There was no such thing as welfare people in those days. You just got on with it. I was used to coal miners with pale faces.

One man blew himself up - I mean he didn't do it purposely, he was one of these slow people, very slow, and he spoke very slow, and he was in the wrong place when the blast went off. He was just peppered, and we were very busy picking all the bits out of him. He had one rather large cavity, and we couldn't find anything in it, and the doctor was sure there must be a huge stone in there.

This fellow said, "Do you know what doc? I reckon that is where the hook of my lamp went." He must have been in absolute agony.

Another that happened, he was fooling around, drunk I suppose, and he was fooling around with dynamite, and he blew his hand off. There were some weird and wonderful things that happened.

Diane: Did you have lots of accidents at Wiluna because of the alcohol?

Nora: No, we didn't, they worked hard, and they drank hard, but the majority drank in their tents, and of course there were restrictions on the mine about having alcohol, they couldn't have it on the mine, so that made a big difference.

There were five hotels there. There were always good hotels in the goldfields, and they had been there since the year dot. One had a tennis court and we decided to use it you see, because by then we had got a few young people who could play tennis, and we asked a couple of men would they sweep it away because it was very rough. They were out of work and they were very glad to do it and we offered them a pound each, and they were thrilled to bits, because a pound in those days was quite good. And the union wouldn't allow them to do it. We had to pay them full rates. Those men would have been jolly glad to have accepted the pound.

Diane: What would full rates have been?

Nora: Sixty shillings a day, but they earned it. Believe me they did!

Diane: What was the town like?

Nora: The population was at the mine, married and single men's quarters. There was no means of getting there. There were six single girls in the town, five hotels, a men's store, and a cool drinks shop. In no time, once the mine was under way, the men started bringing their

wives up - we had to have extra wards and in no time we had hessian wards, four rooms. It was amazing how they went up. At the back we had a verandah for Aboriginal patients. You never got any, really very seldom. A child maybe, some men too.

Diane: Tell me about the Typhoid epidemic.

Nora: I'd been there about a month when typhoid¹ struck. If I could have gone I would have, but there was no means of getting out. No railways yet. Most of the patients we lost were English and Scottish. I presume they weren't here very long and not acclimatised. The Aussies must have been acclimatised. The Americans were apparently quite healthy, because we never had them in, a doctor would go out [to the mine]. They were never hospitalised. To come from a fresh country in the middle of nowhere with nothing but flies and no sanitation. I remember the doctor saying, "If you don't clean up this town I will!"

They had just hessian around holes over toilets. Rubbish was just thrown out. The doctor vowed she would close the boarding house unless the owner did something about his drains and sanitation and got that cleaned up. In next to no time she had the town cleaned up, but we had no serum for typhoid. She had a friend in Perth and she offered to fly serum up if she could get it. She went off in her Studebaker to Meekatharra and got her serum. The other matter was getting the men injected and off she went to the mine. I have never seen so many big men so scared of little needles in my life! They just wouldn't!

She said, "It's up to you, it's your life, not mine. If you don't have the serum you are all going to get it and you will all die." So, very sheepishly one or two came forward, but most just passed out! We ran out of cotton wool and used brown paper for poultices and then we couldn't make out why some were not making any headway, and we found their friends were feeding them on smoked haddock at night. "Poor things, you are starving them," they said. We said, "We are not starving them on purpose, it's the treatment." Another one, his friend was bringing in Indian Root Pills. They are a very strong purgative at any time, and for a man with typhoid. . .! The worst part of it was the people with typhoid were delirious of course at night, and they got very amorous. They were quite convinced you were their girlfriend. One, a Dutchman, he was a lovely boy, he was quite convinced I was his friend. He was so glad I had come to see him. At one stage you were lucky if you got away from the bed. Unless one of the men came and said, "That is enough for tonight." That is how it went on all the time.

I had the bright idea we had to have a night nurse. "If you want a night nurse you have to be the night nurse because I'm not," said the other nurse we had.

In 1928 working hours were reduced at Royal Perth Hospital to 54 hours a week for day duty and 60 hours a week for night duty. At Wiluna the hours were irregular according to need. So, I did three months night duty with relief from Matron now and again. Between us we got through it. We only lost about three patients. It was very trying at night. Always one man would stay awake and keep an eye on them for you. I had the idea to get some men from the mine to volunteer just to watch, but they would not come near the hospital, would not do it. They were not lazy, just terrified. Though they would come in with a splinter in their hand, simply to get female company. At the mine they didn't mix with the married quarters. They just needed company.

When electricity came to the town in 1930 the hospital was the last place to get it. We were far out of town. We used to pray we would not have an accident at night. Our steriliser was a primus stove which I didn't like to use. I hadn't even seen one in the museum. Have you seen a four gallon kerosene tin? Everyone used that - cut it and that was our steriliser on the primus stove. When the babies started arriving we had to have a steriliser that worked. We used to light up every night to keep it going. Bandages got used over and over again, they would be washed, boiled and baked. We washed them and put them in the oven, baked them to sterilise them. Unfortunately doctor had a mania for using forceps so we had a lot of cleaning to do. The younger men started to come, bringing their young wives and babies everywhere.

Diane: How did the hospital cope with the new challenges from young couples, ie babies?

Nora: We got a midwife. She was a real worker. She took my room over as her nursery, you see we had as many as six babies in our little nursery. She did wonders with babies. Because it was freezing cold there at night she would always insist on having a heater out in the shed. We only lost one baby in the time [three years] I was there. The last doctor we had, he was so delighted every time he delivered a baby. I think we should have thrown a party for the baby. I have never known a man to be so delighted to see a child delivered. He was rather fond of forceps deliveries because he didn't like the women suffering. The midwife didn't like forceps deliveries, you see. She was very much against forceps.

Eventually we got a very young doctor straight from Prince Alfred who had never been outback and I used to just cry over him. He was very young and very fair and they had warned him about the heat, and he came complete with topee hat of course; it was a very sensible thing, but the men made no end of fun of him. But he was going to make wonders in Wiluna and in next to no time he had an X-Ray room built, putrid yellow, it stood looking at you! He refused to send the men all the way to Meekatharra. In no time he had got round the mine management and got the X-Ray room, four female wards and a few tents - really marvellous.

Diane: How did Wiluna cope with the water shortage? I believe there was a drought during the depression.

Nora: There was plenty of water in Wiluna - from the artesian wells, but it was hard water. To do the washing you boiled the water, shaved the whole of a bar of soap into the water, and that formed a big thick scum, and you would take that off and then you could do the washing. There was this lady who used to do the laundry for the hospital and hotel - she was over seventy years of age, and her laundry was a knock-out. She used to carry these big sink tubs, they were huge affairs. She used to cart them round to this bench, she was seventy! She also did it all by hand, boiled in an open copper, everything was washed and boiled and rinsed and blued. It was all beautiful.

Oh, there was plenty of water in Wiluna, it just needed bringing to the surface. There had been a drought for seven years, so the place was as dry as a bone, and then the floods came and we had 200 miles of water - all the lakes joined up. So for two years we had water, if we weren't fussy we could go swimming in it because you could occasionally find a dead cow in it, or something like that.

Diane: Was it very pretty with the water?

Nora: Beautiful! We had an old derelict house at the block. We used to sit on the doorstep and watch the grass grow - that's quite honest, you could see the grass growing, and hundreds of miles of wild flowers. It was the most fantastic sight I have ever seen. Beautiful.

However, my big bright light in Wiluna was seeing the Aurora Borealis - it was the most magnificent thing you saw in your life. I was petrified and thought it was the end of the world. I just stood there, bedpans in hand absolutely petrified. It was the most beautiful I had ever seen. When I told the men about it in the morning they said, "Why didn't you get us up?" I said I was frozen, I couldn't have got anyone up I was so terrified. Beautiful things, but terrifying when you don't know what it was. The most beautiful colours, and the whole world was enveloped in them. Pinks, blues, all rainbow colours - magnificent. Apparently I was the only one who saw it in the town. It's a thing you will see once in your life time and to think they missed it! I had no idea what it was, I was just absolutely petrified. I thought it was the end of the world.

Diane: Have you seen it since?

Nora: I saw the Aurora Australis again the other night. It wasn't as good as the one I saw before, but it was very good - it was about four o'clock in the morning - it was beautiful. It lasted for quite a while, and you could see the reflection. So I have seen it twice in my lifetime.

¹ Typhoid was the first major epidemic to hit Western Australia. It causes ulceration of the small intestine and enlargement of the spleen. It is most commonly passed on through water or foodstuffs contaminated by the excreta of a Typhoid sufferer or carrier. Until the advent of antibiotic treatment was difficult. Eating could rupture intestinal ulcers and victims had difficulty taking fluids. The gold discoveries brought a tenfold increase in population and consequently typhoid figures soared. At least one in ten people on the gold fields between 1893 and 1903 contracted typhoid and at least one in ten of those died of it. A proportion of those who survived an attack remained carriers for the rest of their lives and innocently passed on the infection to others. Lady Hackett wrote in 1916 in her *Australian Household Guide* how it is very difficult to make "the man in the street" understand the magnitude and danger of the contest between man and fly. She stated that 30% of deaths in our South African war were due to Typhoid fever and described the constant epidemics in WA, as "a disgrace to our civilisation". In 1886 a Health Act had created Boards of Health both central and local. The first Health Inspector was appointed in 1894. After 1900 and the gold rushes, staff increased, initially because of cases of Bubonic Plague being discovered in WA. The WA Health Department was well aware of the Typhoid problem and attempted to educate people in the gold mining camps about its dangers. Plenty of clean water was the only real answer to Typhoid Fever in WA. Political and economic pressure, backed by Premier Sir John Forrest and engineer C.Y. O'Connor, supplied this in 1903 and thus typhoid was no longer a major killer. However, typhoid carriers have caused outbreaks since. It wasn't until 1945 that WA had its first typhoid free year.

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Equal Pay Circa 1968¹

Bill Latter*

A recent announcement by Jennie George, President of the ACTU, that the Council was intending to pursue a case for real equal pay for women workers, revived memories of the campaign in Western Australia for the same objective in the 1960s.

In the years following the introduction of Industrial Arbitration in WA, the Arbitration Court in rare instances awarded equal pay to women in certain occupations. Some professional women, such as musicians and journalists, obtained equal pay by agreement with the employers in their industry.

From 1912 the Court adopted minimum wage criteria, based on the social concept of the time, that wages were paid to enable the worker (male) and his family to live in reasonable comfort. Axiomatically, a woman was assumed to have no family and like the junior worker should be paid less because she had no family responsibility. This logic did not apply to the single male, who once he turned eighteen or twenty one, became entitled to the full minimum wage.

In 1907 Justice Higgins in the landmark "Harvester" decision declared that the basic wage was the minimum for an unskilled labourer. He determined that a tradesman was entitled to nine shillings a day and the unskilled worker seven shillings. From this case the concept of margins for skill developed and changed over many years so that a margin could be obtained for a number of factors associated with particular classifications. In 1925 the WA Industrial Arbitration Act was amended to include a specific provision enabling the Court to determine annually a basic wage for male and female workers.

These developments within the wage fixing system consolidated the bias against women workers. Although from time to time movements arose around the demand for equal pay in specific industries, and much smaller agitation for the general application of the principle, the demand was always stifled by vociferous opposition from the union leadership who were almost exclusively male.

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From time to time following the 1925 Arbitration Court decision, the basic wage for females was set as a percentage of the male basic wage. From 1926 the female became entitled to a basic wage equivalent to fifty four percent of the basic wage for males. The Second World War brought about a quite radical departure from past practice in those industries that were essential to the war effort. The Female (Minimum Rate) Regulations resulted in significant improvement in the percentage of male rates paid to women and in some cases the granting of equal pay.

As a result of an inquiry instituted by the Federal Arbitration Court in 1950 the gains won during the war were consolidated at a national level in a decision to award women a basic wage equal to seventy five percent of the male wage. Unfortunately the Western Australian Arbitration Court refused to follow the lead of the Federal Court, and in a most conservative judgment determined a new female basic wage of seventy five percent of the male rate, but absorbed the margins of the women into that figure. This sleight of hand resulted in women who had achieved significant marginal rates during the war losing the margin and receiving no increase. Those who had a very small margin received an increase but were confined to the basic wage without a margin.

This decision left women in Western Australia well behind their colleagues employed under Federal awards. In the next twenty years the agitation around women's wages intensified. Specific amendments were made to the NSW Arbitration Act in 1958 enabling that Court to award equal pay, where the work performed by women was of a like nature and of the same range and volume as that done by male workers, and under the same conditions. Where such a case was established in the Court equal pay would be phased in to become fully implemented by 1963.

Western Australia again lagged behind the rest of Australia. Similar legislation was not introduced in WA until 1968, the conservative government having been forced by the labour movement into doing so.

This came about as follows. In 1963 an independent Trades and Labor Council was formed. The new central union authority placed no political restrictions on who could represent the union. As a result the organisation had two well-defined right and left wings. One of the objects espoused by the left wing and centre unions was the issue of equal pay. Some time earlier, professional women employed in education and public service had formed an organisation called the Council for Equal Pay and Opportunity.

The Trades and Labor Council and individual unions with women members sent delegates to that body which increased its militancy and consequently the agitation around the issue of equal pay.

Deputations from the joint organisations to the conservative Brand/Court government met with the response that the responsibility for determining the matter resided with the Industrial Commission. Des O'Neill, the Minister for Labour was adamant that the Commission had the power to grant equal pay, notwithstanding vigorous attempts to convince him otherwise.²

The TLC and the Council decided upon a plan of campaign. The Miscellaneous Workers' Union had as a part of a general claim sought equal pay for employees in milk treatment plants. The women were denied equal pay but were awarded an increase in their margin. It was decided to use the Dairy Industry Award as the vehicle for another specific application.

The employers' advocate agreed with the unions representative that the only issue to be determined was the power of the Commission to award equal pay. So this question was argued as a preliminary matter. The precise question asked was could the Commission award equal pay to women, in the light of previous judgments which had said there needed to be "special circumstances" in order to do so.

The case came on before Senior Commissioner Kelly who delivered the following judgment³:

The real question which the present applicant desires to have determined, however, is whether the Commission has the power to award equal pay to males and females performing the same work when no special conditions exist: In other words, whether the performance by females of work which is also (or usually) performed by males may be used as the sole determinant for awarding equal pay.

The Industrial Arbitration Act 1912-1963, does not contain any provision which in specific terms, either authorises the Commission to grant or prohibits it from granting equal pay to males or females performing the same work. An examination of the Basic Wage provisions of the Act leads me to the conclusion, however, that to grant equal pay in the circumstances posed in the question, would amount to a circumvention of those provisions and would be contrary to the policy of the Act.

After quoting the criteria for determining the basic wage pursuant to the Act, he went on to say:

As I have remarked the Commission constituted by a single Commissioner has no power in relation to the Basic Wage. On the contrary, Section 25 requires that awards shall prescribe and distinguish separately a) the Basic Wage and b) other wages or allowances and/or additional remuneration. The main wage component falling under the heading "other wages and/or additional remuneration" is that which is commonly known as the margin for skill. The principles upon which margins are and have for a great many years been fixed are readily ascertainable and must be taken to have been known to the legislature when the Basic Wage provisions were inserted in the Act in 1925 and again when those provisions were amended in 1950. Those provisions did not then and do not now allow for the granting of such a claim as the present one, and that this is so is borne out by the fact that it was deemed necessary in war time to endow the Women's Employment Board with special jurisdiction to do what the applicant now asks this Commission to do. Viewed in the overall context I think it is clear that it was the intention of the legislature that in the general case females should be paid a lesser rate of wage than males performing the same work.

As a part of the general strategy the union appealed Commissioner Kelly's decision to the Full Bench of the Commission.⁴ The grounds of the appeal were framed so as to ensure that the major questions of the Commission's jurisdiction and the intention of the legislature would be subjected to the scrutiny of the Full Bench. The three grounds were:

1. The commissioner wrongly interprets the power conferred by the Industrial Arbitration Act 1912-1963 on the Commission in Court Session or a single Commissioner to grant equal pay to females.
2. The Commissioner wrongly construes the intent of the legislature on the matter of a lesser wage for females.
3. The Commissioner wrongly finds it is necessary for special circumstances to exist before the Commission may award equal wages.

The Chief Commissioner gave the decision of himself and Commissioner Flannagan, and Commissioner Cort gave an independent judgment supportive of the other two members of the Bench. The judgment occupied some seven pages of reasoned argument on why women could not be awarded equal pay unless special conditions existed. The Bench quoted cases taken in all arbitration jurisdictions in Australia to justify its position. It also compared the legislation in the respective States and the Commonwealth to show that special provisions had to exist in a statute to enable the grant of equal pay for equal work.

One of the important aspects of the decision was that it placed on record most of the relevant Australian industrial case law dealing with women's wages.

The campaign of the Trades and Labor Council and the Council for Equal Pay and Opportunity was successful. They had proved that the Commission did not have the power under the legislation to grant equal pay. The Government could no longer hide behind its rhetoric that equal pay was a matter for the Industrial Commission. The Government finally conceded. In a press statement ⁵ issued on October 25, 1967 the Premier, David Brand, stated:

State Cabinet has decided to authorise payment of male wage and salary rates to Government women employees wherever they are doing work of the same or like nature and of equal value.

The decision was to have effect over a phasing in period of five years so that full equal wages would come into effect in 1972. Cabinet also asked the Department of Labour to advise it of the necessary changes to the legislation so that the Industrial Commission could make an award in appropriate cases.

Whilst much can be said for the tactics of the unions and their allies in the campaign to win legislative changes, there was considerable support forthcoming from the media. Following the Full Bench decision on the appeal, "The West Australian" in bold black type said "Onus for Equal Pay Back on Government." The following day the editorial was captioned "Cabinet Responsibility in Equal Pay Issue".

Earlier, when Cabinet had decided to take no action on legislation for equal pay in 1966, the press had likewise supported the agitation from interest groups with an article headed "Equal Pay - What Now?", and another headed "Mr Brand has Dodged the Equal Pay Issue".

In the years following the legislative changes in 1968 the position of women's wages showed improvement but it was not universal. Professional women made the greatest gains and some tradeswomen who were employed alongside of men received equal wages. But those women in traditionally female employment such as nurses, clerical workers and domestics, that is, the vast majority of women workers, got no improvement.

It is ironic to think that almost thirty years since that campaign was waged the struggle for equal pay between the sexes still continues.

¹ Students of this subject will be interested to know that TLC files are a mine of information about a variety of subjects. I assume that the files have been maintained at the same level as existed in the 1970s. Note that a comprehensive history of equal pay in WA is provided by: Latter, W.S. (1983) *Equal Pay: The Changing Views of a State Tribunal* West Australian Institute of Technology, Perth.

² Author's own papers.

³ (1965) 45 *Western Australian Industrial Gazette* p.770.

⁴ Ibid p.954.

⁵ Trades and Labor Council Equal Pay files.

Book Review

Bill Latter *Blacklegs: The Scottish Colliery Strike of 1911* UWA Press, Perth, 1995, pp.vii + 104, \$16.95.

Michael Hess*

Blacklegs is a book that has been a long time coming. This is true in the sense that 84 years is a long time to wait for the history of one of WA's longest strikes. It is also true in that Bill Latter has been working on it - along with numerous other projects - over a decade of most active "retirement". The end result, made possible in this form by the Charles and Joy Staples South-West Region Publications Fund, has been worth the wait. It is a must for the bookshelves of all interested in understanding what makes the Australian labour movement tick as well as for those with a more narrow interest in significant events of WA history.

This book is in that fine tradition of labour history in which labour movement activists pause long enough to reflect upon the events which form the historical background to their own struggles. Here the former President of the Collie Miners' Union has produced a well researched and readable account of the remarkable events at the Scottish Colliery at Collie Burn in 1911. The paucity of records in what must have been a very oral society creates some difficulties but the use of newspaper quotations from participants gives even the casual reader with no deep interest in history useful insights into the feelings of those directly involved. It is an interesting story in its own right written with a knowledge of the industry and the community one would expect of an author who has had such a close association with both.

For me, however, the most outstanding aspects of the book are its many echoes of current industrial relations issues. Again, given Bill's continued interest in the contemporary labour movement, this is hardly surprising. There will be many among the readers of this journal who are in a better position to make these judgements than I, but to this Eastern States reader the parallels with contemporary WA (and national) events which were most striking included:

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- the determination of management and the Government of the day to discover “matters of principle” upon which to confront organised workers - reminiscent of both WA and Australian Government ministers’ recent statements of the “who’s in charge” variety;
- the potential lengthiness of disputation where there is no compulsion to negotiate a settlement - echoing the problems so many employees have faced with enterprise bargaining; and
- the use of a co-operative scheme to create a shared interest between management and employees - an outcome dear to the hearts of those promoting the illusory concepts of individual contract employment.

Overall the clear impression is of a dispute initially set off by the stupid behaviour of an employee and the childish response of his immediate supervisor, whose concern with his own authority would not be out of place in a school yard bully. Subsequently, senior management and government officials vied with each other to prolong a senseless dispute. After 18 weeks of argy-bargy a conclusion was reached which generally endorsed the union’s position. The immediate costs were great and the colliery never recovered.

What price compulsory conciliation and arbitration?

