

# VICTORIAN HISTORICAL JOURNAL



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ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF VICTORIA

## ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF VICTORIA

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**Front cover:** Collins Street, Melbourne looking west from 'The Block' showing  
a Victory rally at the end of World War 1. E.J. Frazer, photographer, courtesy  
State Library of Victoria

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## Introduction

This special issue of the *Victorian Historical Journal* is the outcome of a highly successful conference hosted by the Royal Historical Society of Victoria to mark the centenary of the outbreak of the Great War in August 1914. The conference, opened by the Hon. Ted Baillieu, former premier of Victoria and chair of the Victorian ANZAC Centenary Committee, was titled 'The Other Face of War: Victorians and the Homefront'. It focused on Melbourne, though the impact of war on rural Victoria and the hardship and sacrifices endured by small country communities were central to one paper and were alluded to in others.

The federation of the Australian colonies in 1901 had marked the inauguration of Melbourne as the first national capital, a status the city held until the Commonwealth parliament was transferred to Canberra in 1927. Melburnians' sense of the city's significance was confirmed and expanded during the years of the Great War, which saw the most vital economic, administrative and military powers concentrated in the national government. Melbourne thus became the focal point for interest groups of all kinds and the place where they mainly gathered to lobby, to meet, to confer and to demonstrate. The publication of these articles makes an important contribution to understanding not only the Victorian home front, but also the national experience of suffering, hard work, bitterness and conflict the war engendered.

Bart Ziino was invited to give the 2014 Augustus Wolskel Memorial Lecture, which inaugurated the conference. Titled 'At Home with the War: The Great War in Victorian Private Life', the resulting article examines the Great War in Victoria through the lens of private sentiment. The article draws primarily on personal letters and diaries to tell a story of the war as a constant preoccupation in which people struggled to cope with the demands it made on them psychologically and emotionally. Ziino suggests that the interplay of personal anxiety about loved ones and public conflict over the distribution of the burden of sacrifice may provide a conduit for reconceptualising the bitterness and anger that divided so many communities.

These themes of personal suffering and sacrifice are also central to Michael McKernan's article, 'Doing It Tough: Life on the Rural Home Front'. It focuses on the losses suffered by many thousands of families

in country towns and communities throughout Victoria, losses that were not only deeply personal, but also devastating for the economies of country communities where the labour of those who enlisted was never replaced. The enormous effort that went into memorialisation was one way these towns and districts were able to restore a sense of unity and to advertise the extent of their sacrifice for the new nation.

Ross McMullin's contribution, "Heartstrings Aching for the Absent Boy": Years of Anguish—the Losses of War', also focuses on suffering and loss. However, while stressing the life-long pain of families that lost sons, brothers and husbands, he also puts a compelling case for the profound loss incurred to the nation by the deaths of many particularly gifted young men. Their rich potential to make major contributions to Australia's future in a variety of areas was lost.

Three articles deal particularly with the part played on the home front by women and girls as well as the conflicts the war engendered among them. Judith Smart focuses on some of the issues that divided the 52 member organisations within the National Council of Women of Victoria, particularly the battles between feminist pacifists and imperial pro-war loyalists over questions of peace and free speech, recruitment and conscription, attitudes to Germans, and between middle-class and working-class housewives over means of reducing the cost of living. Rosalie Triolo's article, "Doing All that is Possible": Women State School Teachers, Girls and Preferred Contributions to Victoria's War Effort, 1914–18', argues that while male teachers and senior male students were encouraged to enlist and provided with facilities to do so, women teachers and girls were channeled into a narrow range of home-front comforts activities. Indeed, the Education Department was 'nearly silent' about the possibility that they might 'go to war's battle front' as nurses or members of Voluntary Aid Detachments. While this, she claims, reflected gendered assumptions, it was also a consequence of the need to fill the vacancies in teaching left by the enlistment of a 'staggering 50 per cent of male teachers'. Carole Woods also stresses the patriotic work of many Victorian women in her examination of 'Federal Government House: Headquarters of the Australian Red Cross'. Marshalling the voluntary work of thousands of largely middle-class women in suburbs and towns across the nation, the Red Cross was headed by the governor general's exceedingly able wife, Lady Helen Munro Ferguson, who co-ordinated its energies and activities and oversaw their extension to Egypt, England, France and beyond.

The patriotic role of brass bands on the Victorian home front is the subject of Jillian Durance's article, 'The Band has Rendered Valuable Service', which examines the response of these community organisations to the needs of recruiting, fundraising, and the farewelling and welcoming home of the troops. It also assesses the losses many bands suffered from enlistment of their members and the consequent threat to their survival, but concludes that the bands were still playing an important part in sustaining community identity and morale at war's end.

The final three articles all deal with aspects of working-class culture and identity, detailing some of the experiences of working people and their responses to the unequal sacrifices expected of them on the home front. In his article 'Class or Nation? Worker Loyalties in Melbourne during the Great War', John Lack examines the violence that accompanied one of the street protests for cheaper food in Melbourne in August 1917. He argues that the attacks on particular business premises 'originated in pre-war tensions between workers and employers, made worse by wartime unemployment, inflation, forced enlistment (economic conscription), and the threat of industrial regimentation'. Peter Love discusses the response of Frank Anstey, one of the leading figures in the oppositional left faction of the Labor Caucus, in 'Frank Anstey, Money Power and the Labour Split in War Time'. He argues that, from 'his own distinctively left populist' position, Anstey steadily moved away from the Labor Party elites and the unions to identify with 'the class from which he had come, the common people', now viewed as 'an insurgent working class'. Like Lack and Love, Peter Burke also directs attention to the preoccupations of grassroots working people, focusing on war-time workplace football. Loyalist pressures to end wartime workplace football, were resisted by employers wedded to industrial welfare and workers wanting to play the game, their motives being cloaked by fundraising rhetoric.

Together these articles constitute a broad and multi-faceted view of the home front in Victoria, revealing a society characterised by a contradictory mix of intense patriotism, profound division and bitterness, severe economic hardship, deep personal tragedy and pain, and irrecoverable national loss. It is hoped they will serve to counter any temptation to see the war in nationalist or heroic terms. We are grateful to the ANZAC Centenary Community Grants, Department of Veteran Affairs, for assistance in publishing this special issue of the *Victorian Historical Journal*.

*Judith Smart, Richard Broome and Jane Carolan*

## *Victorian Historical Journal's* **New Look**

This special issue on the Victorian home front in the Great War introduces a new look for the *VHJ*. It has been designed by Janet Boschen of Boschen Design and implemented by John Gillespie of Kiplings Business Communications. Much will be familiar in the style, but the cover and opening page designs are a little smarter, and we will use the end pages to say a little more about the RHSV and its work for other Victorian local history societies. The Publications Committee hopes you enjoy the modified style. Happy reading!

*Richard Broome*

Convenor Publications Committee

## **VALE**

**Dr Catherine Anne ('Kate') Jones**

**5.10.1949 – 13.3.2015**

Recipient RHSV Distinguished Service Award 2014

The RHSV extends its sympathies to the family and friends of Kate who succumbed to Motor Neurone Disease after a dignified defiance. Kate continued to volunteer her services to the production of this journal until her final few months.



'Kate' Jones (courtesy of Stephen Alomes)

## At Home with the War: The Great War in Victorian Private Life

The 2014 Augustus Wolskel Lecture, Delivered Friday 8 August 2014<sup>1</sup>

*Bart Ziino*

### **Abstract:**

*This article examines the Great War in Victoria through the lens of private sentiment. It exposes not only the diversity of perspectives and sentiment surrounding the war, but also the stresses endured by Victorians trying to reconcile their commitment to the war with personal and familial needs. Their experience was dominated by a confrontation with powerful currents of anxiety over the war and their loved ones, and increasing tensions within their communities over who was bearing the greater burdens of the war. Investigating private experience of total war at home allows us to see how Victorians made as well as endured the Great War, as their communities struggled to remain cohesive, and individuals struggled to cope with its demands.*

It is entirely appropriate, at the centenary of the Great War, that we should contemplate the multiple faces of that war, to draw attention again to the struggle conducted not only on the battlefields of Europe and the Middle East, but at home in Australia and Victoria. As in all other belligerent societies, between 1914 and 1918 Victorians assumed the fundamental task of sustaining the will to fight this new and terrible kind of war. It was a war not only visited upon them, but a war that they very consciously helped to continue, both to the point of their enemies' capitulation and to the point of profound social division in their own communities. The following examines the Great War in Victoria as a private experience, drawing primarily on personal letters and diaries to tell a story of the war as an individual, familial and communal trial. This was not simply a contest between those for and against the war, or a story of a community moving from consensus to division. We need to think about Victorians' relationship with the war less as a question of support or opposition, than as a constant preoccupation in which most

people felt personally deeply divided, determined that the war should be won, but struggling with the demands that it made upon them in their most intimate lives.

Two main currents of feeling dominated the emotional world of Australians between 1914 and 1918. The first was the persistent anxiety that accompanied both the course of the war and the wellbeing of loved ones at the front. That anxiety contended with a widely held belief in the righteousness of the war, even as it eroded the resilience of those at home. The second was the severe tension over what could be given and who should bear the burdens of the war—a question that remained with individuals and families for the entirety of the war. Here the imperative to win the war came into conflict with the need to maintain family structures and economies, and this provides the other key dynamic of private life and sentiment in wartime Victoria. That tension infused the conscription campaigns, and drew the deeply personal recriminations that marked the war at home, as each measured their own obligations and sacrifices against those of others. This then is the story of an intense confrontation with the emotions fostered by the war—one that allows us to get much closer to the history of civilian engagement with the war, the antagonism over the sacrifices demanded, and the contest over its meaning.

Study of the war at home has been a serious field of endeavour for several decades, and has produced incisive accounts of the deep social, economic, and sectarian conflicts that attended the effort to prosecute the war. Groundbreaking studies turned on their head any sense in which the Victorian community was united behind the war and the Empire.<sup>2</sup> In the last decade or so we have been invited in our studies of the Great War to look again at our very rich archives, to listen more carefully still to those whose voices we might hear in those records, to think more laterally about who speaks from the wartime past, and what they are saying about their experiences of the Great War.<sup>3</sup> Listening more intently to the people of the past has had important effects in our understanding of the war, especially in terms of narrowing the distance between those who went away to fight, and those who remained at home. Traditionally, it has been easy to maintain a distinction between the experiences of Australians at the battlefield, and those at home, firstly because they were literally separated by half a world, and secondly because in Australia we do not see the same kinds of mobilisation

of military and industrial resources (including women's labour) that occurred in Europe. In turn, this makes it easy to suggest that Australians did not understand the realities of the war, or what their soldiers endured at the front. Indeed, such accusations stem from the war period itself, when they were directed against those who appeared indifferent to the demands of the war, and who did not seem to be committing themselves to victory in this first total war.

If we accept such divisions between the ways in which soldiers and civilians experienced the war, however, we cloud our understanding of the civilian commitment to total war – an issue that has been occupying scholars of the war internationally and in Australia.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, we deny ourselves an understanding of the level of interaction between the fronts, as people, objects, news and knowledge moved constantly back and forth over more than four years of war. A focus on those interactions reveals that the experience of the war at home had its own legitimacy as an integral element of prosecuting a total war, just as it was deeply intertwined with the war at the fighting front.

Historians have challenged the idea that Australians responded with 'unbounded enthusiasm' to the war in 1914, detecting much more muted and hesitant reactions.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Victorians exhibited nervousness and worry from the earliest moments of the war. This should not be read as a lack of support for the Empire's war: Australians were committed to defeating Germany. But, over the first several weeks of fighting, the scale of battlefield losses would become easily apparent to those reading the press in Victoria. Hopes of a dramatic breakthrough and conclusion to the war were being driven not just by an unthinking expectation of victory, but by alarm at the tremendous sacrifice that was taking place at the front. In turn, this produced significant anxiety amongst those whose loved ones enlisted to go to the war, and perhaps more immediately among those many Victorians who had direct family links to the United Kingdom, if not Germany. As war commenced, Margaret Stanley, whose husband was Governor Arthur Stanley, was seized by a deep anxiety about her family at home:

We are living in a nightmare and indeed everyone must be—out here it is so difficult to realize it all—and it is heart rending to be so far away ... Pray God that we come out of it all right! It is difficult to write because one can think of nothing but of what is going on at home, and yet one can only utter such banalities about it all.<sup>6</sup>

One need not have been in Victoria on vice-regal duties to feel this way, of course. English migrant Robert Antill told his family that despite their relief that he was away from it all in Australia, 'I feel I would like to be with you all again and help to share with your troubles.'<sup>7</sup> Others felt their unease much closer to home, as their loved ones prepared to depart Australia for the war. The pride that families felt in soldier sons, husbands and uncles fighting in the war was leavened with fretting about the future. John Monash's niece declared that she hoped 'that the war will be over before you leave for it is awful to have anyone you are fond of going.'<sup>8</sup> In Hawthorn, on the eve of her son's departure, Ellen Derham exclaimed: 'The whole thing is still like a nightmare to me + it will be until I hear that you are coming home again.'<sup>9</sup> And we might imagine what Alfred Adams' mother had written to him at the outbreak of the war by the terms of his reply: 'Your letter came too late. I have already volunteered to go to Europe'.<sup>10</sup>

These responses begin to illuminate the trials of enduring and prosecuting the war when one's investments in it were all at once imperial, national and deeply personal. The attempt to cope emotionally with the absence of loved ones, to maintain families and economies, was a major challenge and, as we will see, persistent anxiety tested commitment to the war, even amongst the most patriotic individuals. When her husband left for the front in 1914, Ethel Goddard in Brighton found herself alone and responsible for their two young children as well as the family's financial management. Her health quickly deteriorated, though it was fully a year before she revealed to her husband that she had lost a great deal of weight, and that 'I felt your parting so much when you had gone I nearly broke my heart.'<sup>11</sup> For younger women too, the war disrupted social relationships, as they watched their male friends leaving. In Ascot Vale, Nellie Fisher had several friends and family members enlisting. 'There will be no boys left soon', she wrote in mid-1915.<sup>12</sup> Even if overstated, this was a common sentiment, and pointed to the problem of men's respective duties to family and to nation, and the difficult decision-making men and their families were obliged to confront.

The point here is that the scale of the war and its demands were quite clear at home, especially after Australian forces joined the action at Gallipoli in April 1915. A range of heightened emotions coalesced at this time. Knowledge that Australians were in action, together with the

first casualty lists, induced profound worry about the wellbeing of loved ones at the front. All that was certain, Victoria's Director of Education Frank Tate noted, was that 'the first casualty lists have been published, and there is gloom everywhere. The wildest rumours are being circulated ... Most of us are keeping our minds in a state of suspended judgement, and hoping for the best.'<sup>13</sup> At the same time, simmering bitterness towards Germans erupted with the sinking of the *Lusitania* and their use of poison gas, while a growing recognition that the war was not going well for the Allies, enhanced both anxiety and anger. The expansion of the war—including the opening of the Dardanelles front—might have offered some hope for its resolution, but increasingly it became a sign of the war having taken on a life of its own. Together with the return of the first wounded and public expressions of pride in the soldiers' achievements, this produced what medical practitioner Felix Meyer called, 'very mixed feelings' about the war.<sup>14</sup>

The response to those mixed feelings in Victoria, as elsewhere, was an extraordinary emotional mobilisation, on one hand undertaken to support soldiers, but on the other to cope with anxiety. The expressions of that mobilisation came in the production of 'comforts' for soldiers and the forming of communities around such institutions as the Red Cross, but also less formal circles of support in families and local communities, in which soldiers' families exchanged news and shared their burdens. By the end of June 1915, Frank Tate articulated the sentiment:

A very great change has come over our attitude with regard to the war. The enormous casualty lists, and the German success in Galicia, want of progress in France, and the apparent standstill in the Dardanelles are affecting us very much. Our folk are getting very restive ... I think there is a determination to get busy and do things.<sup>15</sup>

Tate was right, and the two most easily measurable expressions of that mobilisation—enlistments for the Australian Imperial Force and the proliferation of patriotic work—spiked remarkably in Victoria, where efforts to recruit for the Australian Imperial Force first took on a much more organised aspect, and thus public rhetoric began to speak more forcefully about the need for commitment to the war.

For military-aged men, a shift was occurring in the personal dynamic between duty to home and duty to nation. David Moore of Armadale, thirty-seven and single in May 1915, already had military



**A lone Victorian woman knits socks for the Australian Comforts Fund.** Courtesy of the Australian War Memorial, H02438

experience and saw those obligations shifting clearly. He insisted: 'It is certainly very hard on the poor Mater but I am afraid the matter is out of my hands now and it must be considered a duty.'<sup>16</sup> Women and girls of all ages found sanctioned outlets for their feelings—though other avenues were closed off—in knitting and sewing. Mat Roth noted that 'we are all knitting as hard as we can, in the trams and trains it is no unusual sight to see a ball of wool roll under the seat and two or three people rescuing it.'<sup>17</sup> Seeking an outlet for their desire to contribute to the war might have been one reason for this phenomenon, though other women, like Jacoba Palstra of Northcote, also admitted that time spent knitting and sewing helped to distract them from their anxieties: Palstra found that 'Work is a great blessing after all', as she set to work on a pair of mittens for her son.<sup>18</sup>

If distraction was one way of coping with anxiety, corresponding with loved ones offered a more immediate sense of connection with the battlefield and their wellbeing. Australians' distance from the front added a particular complexity to that effort. With two sons at the front, Jacoba Palstra found that 'The worst is to be thousands of miles away

and always thinking in the other part of the globe.'<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, letter writing was particularly important as a form of 'emotional work'. In this, women in particular worked to maintain links between themselves and loved ones at the front, and in so doing, to sustain those men at war emotionally and psychologically. Similarly we should not underestimate the importance of letters from the front in nourishing home front resilience.<sup>20</sup> In November 1916, as the Somme campaign came to an end, Palstra was delighted with a long letter from her son. 'I have just gone over it again', she told him, 'it is sparkling energie [*sic*] and life, it was as though I felt it coming into my veins.'<sup>21</sup> Only a cable, taking as little as two days to arrive, could offer greater relief: 'These are very anxious times', Palstra would write in June 1918, 'and a cable with good news is like water in a dry land.'<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, such correspondence could only ever moderate persistent anxiety, as it provided only momentary respite. Without any real sense of when the war might end, Palstra thought that the best thing to do was 'to look not too far ahead, and thank the Lord for every bit of the way safely past.'<sup>23</sup>

Older men often found it more difficult to find such outlets for their feelings, and so we need to think about age as a category of analysis, as much as gender, when examining the war at home. Men are not so prominent as correspondents with the front as women—reflecting Michael Roper's observation that mothers provided 'the key link to life beyond the war' for soldiers—though they are hardly unrepresented.<sup>24</sup> In Kew, sixty-five-year-old scholar, Dr John Purves Wilson (see *ADB* entry) described himself as one 'unable to do much actively to the great cause, but still vigorous enough to desire with all his heart and soul to do something.'<sup>25</sup> Augustus Wolskel—after whom this lecture is named—offered his services as a technical chemist after the Germans had first used poison gas at the front, but was never called on, possibly, he thought, because he was over military age or perhaps because of what he called his 'foreign descent': his father was born in Germany.<sup>26</sup> Giving money provided some relief for such men, and this too spiked in mid-1915. More positively, fathers of men at the front, as Kate Hunter has shown, advocated for sons' interests through official channels and so remained enmeshed in their care and wellbeing.<sup>27</sup>

Coping with anxiety consumed emotional resilience, but it was attended by a widespread belief in the righteousness of the Empire's cause. The commitment to defeating Germany was strong, and not

simply jingoistic. The judge Henry Bournes Higgins—an opponent of the Boer War—supported a war against German aggression and in favour of the rights of small nations such as Belgium. Though his liberal tendencies were strong, he felt inclined to ask the author of a dissenting book on the war: ‘What would he recommend an able-bodied young Belgian to do when the Germans invaded his country, and did horrible things, in 1914-5?’<sup>28</sup> So too the poet Bernard O’Dowd, who had been a member of the Victorian Socialist Party, declared that ‘I believe in the stand that England and France have taken’, fearing that democracy would be damned in the event of a German victory and ‘Prussian overlordship of the world.’<sup>29</sup> Even the committed socialist Robert Ross admitted his having been ‘more mentally disturbed’ over the issues of the war ‘than at any period in my life’, though he ultimately remained dedicated to advocating peace as the only means to ending war for good.<sup>30</sup>

Even if the great majority of Australians remained dedicated to winning the war, that commitment still involved intense negotiation within families about what could be given, and deeply felt conflict among individuals as to where one’s duties lay. Despite intense public pressures to enlist, there remained a strong insistence in private, especially in working class communities, that a man could judge family responsibility and masculine duty for himself, and remain behind on that basis. When the federal government commenced actively to question military-aged men about their enlistment intentions at the end of 1915, they discovered that men continued to judge their responsibilities in terms of family and self, as much as nation and Empire.<sup>31</sup>

That the overwhelming majority of respondents refused to enlist was not simply resistance, so much as the weighing of two competing forms of duty against each other. Fathers with children found it easiest to declare that their priorities lay at home, though single men with aged parents to consider, also insisted on their familial obligations. Thirty-two-year-old John Rosser, a railway employee at Newport, insisted that he had no inclination to enlist, as ‘I consider my duty clear to stay here and keep my wife and children.’<sup>32</sup> Such men were negotiating the meaning of ‘duty’, not just in terms of their obligations to the state, but in terms of a whole series of interests, including wives and children, parents and siblings, who represented a different conception of male duty entirely. As the cost of living increased dramatically in 1915 and 1916, the issue became more acute, and the imperative to provide made

it possible to explain one’s decision not to enlist in terms that already had social weight. With a wife and four children, Bertram Cameron of West Brunswick thought that if he enlisted, ‘I consider I would be shirking my duty as a man.’<sup>33</sup>

Families were not rejecting the demands of war outright, but made their own determinations of what they could afford to give, and reorganised their domestic labour and finances accordingly. In 1914 William Anderson tossed a coin with his brother to determine who would go to the war. His brother would go, while his ‘promise was to take care of Mother and Sister till his return or otherwise.’<sup>34</sup> The seeming flippancy of Anderson’s method should not obscure the level of reorganisation of family resources involved in committing to war, and the difficulties that enlistment entailed for those at home. All of this had to be weighed in the balance. Wives especially, though not exclusively, emerge as confidants with a genuine stake in the decision. At Yarrowonga, George Drysdale was deterred not only by the insufficiency of a soldier’s pay, but pointed out that ‘my Wife strongly objects and I will not enlist against her wish.’<sup>35</sup> From a parent’s perspective, too, a family’s sacrifice had to be contained both in terms of lost labour and the prospect of lost life. In West Melbourne, Reginald Rundle’s mother therefore assumed responsibility for her son’s refusal to enlist: ‘There are two sons already enlisted’, she wrote. ‘This one is the only one left. The first one went on condition that this one stayed at home.’<sup>36</sup>

These responses to the government’s questioning reveal that the demands of the war, while ubiquitous in 1916, were not simply accepted as the citizen’s fundamental responsibility. Men measured their own responsibilities against those of other men. In this deeply subjective process, it was easy for men to perceive others as bearing a greater obligation to enlist; eventually this widespread perception paralysed recruiting. For some, conscription promised to provide a circuit breaker for this paralysis, not only forcing everyone to go in their turn, but releasing them from their own obligations to family. On the other hand, conscription threatened to upset those delicate family arrangements. In one important sense, the conscription campaign in 1916 was about who was bearing the greater burden of the war, and here again it very quickly became apparent that the same evaluation of other citizens’ obligations and one’s own capacities was occurring. This means that while historians have done important work on understanding the vote in terms of class,

sectarian, or regional interests, these factors—as Michael McKernan has observed—are shot through with moral and personal questions that need to be addressed.<sup>37</sup> Thus we should understand not only the disruption of families' arrangements that conscription threatened, but the anxieties surrounding the survival of loved ones at the front that so fuelled the 'yes' campaign. On the eve of the campaign, for instance, city worker William Calder was restless about his son in France. The casualties on the Somme were weighing heavily, and he declared that 'We here, particularly those of us who have our all at stake, are longing for an early conclusion so that we can welcome our dear lads home again.'<sup>38</sup>

The fight over conscription thus matched a determination to win the war and remove loved ones from danger with the need to preserve households and the family structures that underpinned them—including households that already had men at war. The stakes were extremely high, and so we can understand Malvern woman Sarah Simonson when she observed that 'Everyone here is keenly excited re Referendum and it seems to me almost to have become a personal question.' Those who had relatives at the front, she thought, would vote in favour, but amongst those opposed, she saw a desire to protect family members from going; many women, she believed, could not bear to send others' sons to be killed, though she simply accused Catholics of doing what their leaders told them to do.<sup>39</sup> Others again blamed German influence, or simply a failure to recognise the danger in which Australia was placed. It is rather a more difficult proposition to see the fight over conscription from inside working-class homes, though we can certainly observe that feeling and thinking about the issue ran as deep here as elsewhere. Observing both sides of the debate, the Austrian immigrant Francis Gossler was shocked at the 'awfull [*sic*] turmoil'. People in Melbourne, he said

seem to [be] losing control of themselves. One never knows what the next day will bring. I always had the greatest respect for the calm and deliberate temperament of the Australians, but if they continue doing as they are, they will soon be able to take the cake from our friends the Italians as regards the lack of control of their feelings.<sup>40</sup>

Whichever way the vote went, recriminations would be vicious. Mabel Allen in Ararat thought conscription would be carried, but worried that 'trouble may follow, and we don't want to experience anything like war out here.'<sup>41</sup>



'Vote No Mum', 1917, and 'Vote Yes Mum', 1917. Both sides of the conscription debate appealed to deep anxieties about the breaking up of families, antagonising each other over who was bearing the greater burden of the war. Riley and ephemera collection, courtesy of the State Library of Victoria

The defeat at the polls hit hard for pro-conscriptionists, and we should not ignore the deep anger and indeed shame that many advocates genuinely felt, as they interpreted their fellows as having abandoned their loved ones at the front, while disgracing Australia in its duty to Empire and Allies. J. P. Wilson wrote with chagrin that 'we

are hanging our heads over the result and no longer boasting of our glory.<sup>42</sup> Both Wilson and the Melbourne industrialist Frederick David Michaelis had railed against the working class before the conscription vote as those who were shirking their responsibilities. After the vote they were hardly less disparaging, though now they were critical of a much broader spectrum of their fellow citizens. Wilson insisted that: 'The adverse decision was due to pure selfishness in all classes'; while Michaelis told his soldier-son that 'large numbers could not rise above their personal feelings and are thus satisfied to sacrifice, if need be, all our brave fellows at the different fronts.' The worst part of it, he went on, was that those who voted 'no', could not be 'made to feel what their votes have meant.'<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, that anger could be, and was, played out on very personal levels. Ethel Goddard, with her husband in France, refused to see former family friends after the vote: 'they don't come here now since conscription. I told them what I thought of them. The mother won't let they [*sic*] boys go to the war.'<sup>44</sup>

In public, as in private, the antipathies and suspicions that surfaced in the conscription campaign could not be submerged again. They exploded in a series of ructions in the second half of 1917, including the Great Strike and riots in Melbourne's streets, while the news of the terrible casualties suffered in Belgium in September and October that year fuelled demands for a second vote on conscription.<sup>45</sup> This opened the way to even more bitter social division. But in terms of personal commitment to the war, the second half of 1917 was also a critical point, at which large numbers of people with family at the front began to question their own capacity to continue. This does not mean that they turned against the war, or questioned the need to continue, but that they recognised the toll that their anxiety was taking on them personally. In one way, at least, that degradation of resilience was quantifiable. From the time of the battles of the Somme in mid-1916, the Defence Department began to receive persistent appeals for the release of family members from service. These intensified in 1917, and in mid-1918 were being dealt with daily.<sup>46</sup>

The urge, that so overwhelmed people's efforts to cope, was related to the events of the war, as much as to individual soldier's particular circumstances. There were several signs in late 1917 that the war was not going well, and that men at the front were enduring terrible conditions. When Australians learned that the federal government had sought

and failed to have soldiers who had been away more than three years, returned to Australia for a month over the winter of 1917-18 they were dismayed. While the Minister for Defence enjoined soldiers' families and friends to 'exercise the same noble virtues of patience and self-sacrifice that had distinguished their soldier relatives', anxious Victorians were struggling to maintain those virtues.<sup>47</sup> The strain was compounded by the terrible losses being reported from Passchendaele; the Italian front was crumbling at Caporetto, the Bolshevik Revolution finally withdrew Russia from the war and, in Australia, a second referendum on the issue of conscription once again made the sufferings of the men at the front a matter for public debate. Further still, the prospect of another hard European winter at the front, compounded anxieties about the wellbeing of loved ones still fighting.

By the end of 1917 a powerful feeling had developed, even among the most committed Victorians, that *their* men had been away long enough. But it was not just the wellbeing of the men at the front that fuelled those claims; so much as it was an awareness of the impact of the tension and anxiety those at home were enduring. Citing the deterioration of their own health as they waited, numerous Victorians felt themselves approaching breaking point. While hardly conceding the desire to win the war, they at least felt that expressing the depth of their anxiety was legitimate. Hoping to have her brother returned home, Constance Cowell of Yarram, Gippsland, could cite the death of two other brothers at the front. But she also pointed to the fact that 'At present Mother is in very indifferent health, the result of so much anxiety over Claude and shock occasioned by the death of my two soldier brothers and my dear Father.'<sup>48</sup> Hettie Claredge of Stawell expressed the same difficulties. Claredge had constantly assured her children that their father, away since 1914, would soon be home. Now, in ill health 'with the constant strain and worry of the war', she found herself unable to continue the charade. Surely, she hoped, somebody could be found to take her husband's place.<sup>49</sup>

The second conscription campaign was conducted against this background, as again those on all sides weighed their commitment to the war and their personal suffering against others. Fred Michaelis had one son still at the front; another had died earlier in the year. Now, he did not speak of Australia's duty to Empire when he hoped that 'the "Cold footers" will be compelled to serve their country', so much as

he wanted 'our brave men in the trenches to get some well earned rest, and at the same time end the war ... in order that those near and dear to us may escape harm and return to us.'<sup>50</sup> Requests for the return of sons and husbands continued beyond the failure of the campaign, and indeed after the terrible fears raised by the initial success of the German offensive in March and April 1918. The surviving evidence suggests a strong patriotic middle-class bias in requests for the return of loved ones. For instance, Sydney Stott founder of Stott's Business College, was only one of those to request the return of one of his sons, citing the strain he and his invalid wife were feeling, along with his patriotic credentials.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, working-class people are not unrepresented in these appeals. Annie Carroll at Fyansford was lucky enough to have her son return on furlough in mid-1918, though another son had been killed and yet another had lost a leg. The thought of his returning to the front was too much for her, and she appealed to the Governor-General, claiming that:

if I have to part with this Boy again I never will be able to stand the strain the home is with out the eldest Boy and it will be with[out] a mother as I will never be able to part with him again it will be the course [sic] of puting [sic] me to my grave after him been away from home for three years and a harf [sic]<sup>52</sup>

What all this suggests is that demands for the return of sons were no index of one's commitment to the war. Instead, they were a powerful measure of the arduousness of civilian endurance.

The exhaustion surrounding the war in 1918 was not just about endemic social and political division, but the constant effort required to maintain one's emotional commitment in the face of increasing knowledge of conditions at the front, deteriorating living conditions at home, and an awareness of the toll that enduring anxiety was having on oneself and in one's community. Socialists and peace activists might have been excited by the potential for some traction under these conditions, and they were themselves increasingly willing to confront the authorities. But the reality in mid-1918, as Vida Goldstein candidly told a colleague in Denmark, was that 'We are finding it more difficult than it has been since the outbreak of war to carry on our Anti-Militarist work out here.'<sup>53</sup> Goldstein thought Australians had been hamstrung by the government's War Precautions Act, though we surely must recognise

the persistence of the belief that the war was worth winning, even in the face of social division and the daily difficulty of coping with anxiety. William Calder's excoriation of his fellow citizens at this time, should not distract us from his fundamental dedication to the war, and those who were fighting it at the front:

One half of the people here are living and acting as if there was no such thing as a hideous war in full blast at the other side with our kith and kin in a death's struggle to keep our beloved mother land and the world free, and a place worth living in. The other half is doing its little best to back up our brave boys at the front with what little encouragement and moral support we can give them.<sup>54</sup>

The end of the war was a relief on all sides, though the struggle over its meaning would continue. Reuben Hallenstein, who had lost his son, felt that the victory had vindicated the sacrifice; socialist Lil Farrell was excited by the armistice, though not 'overwhelmed enough to parade the streets with a Red, White and Blue flag.'<sup>55</sup> For her, the war might be a precursor to the end of capitalism. On the other hand, despite Wiebe Palstra's observation that his wife 'has aged a bit and sometimes ... shows signs of weariness', Jacoba Palstra allowed herself some relief at Christmas in 1918. It was 'the first time in years that one dared to be happy and show it too.'<sup>56</sup> She looked forward to her family being reunited. In Doncaster, however, Minnie Friedensenti, with her German background, was less certain: 'Somehow I always thought if we could celebrate Xmas in peace time again it would be quite different', she wrote, 'but somehow I don't feel at all as if I want to jump over the moon.'<sup>57</sup>

The ambivalence of such responses to the war at its conclusion would make it hard to remember 1914-18 as any kind of unitary and positive experience. Commemorative acts sought to conceal division in their calls to the unity said to have existed at the beginning of the war, and which the Anzacs were supposed to have embodied on the battlefield. In any case, memorials and commemorative ceremonies increasingly spoke to the sacrifices of the men who enlisted and served, rather than what had been endured on the home front. Nevertheless, there is one public acknowledgement that for those who lived it, the experience of the Great War in Victoria was worth remembering. It is hardly hidden.

On one wall of the Shrine of Remembrance is inscribed a dedication by a 'grateful people' to the memory of those men and women who served in the war. This was Victorians' tribute to those who went away to fight. But on the western wall of the Shrine is another dedication:

This Shrine established in the hearts of men as on the solid earth commemorates a people's fortitude and sacrifice.

'A people's fortitude and sacrifice'! Those who dedicated this memorial well understood that this was meant to recognise the torment and pain they themselves had experienced, if not the divisions between them. The war at home had been draining and bitter, but we do ourselves a disservice if we understand this reality only in terms of conflict between supporters and opponents of the war. The war, most Victorians believed, had to be won. What they inscribed on the Shrine of Remembrance was the torment and anxiety of waiting, hoping and enduring. It was this that had so tested their capacities to meet the war's demands, and it was this that had driven them into conflict with those they deemed not to be sacrificing to the same extent. That intimate story of the Great War has become less obvious to us today, but for those who endured it, this *was* their war, not divorced from the battlefield and its realities, but deeply enmeshed with it. If we appreciate this, we might begin to understand again the enormity of their experience.

#### NOTES:

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- 9 Ellen Derham to Alfred Plumley Derham, 22 October 1914. Papers of Alfred Plumley Derham, A.1979.0096, 7/2/1/1, University of Melbourne Archives (UMA).
- 10 Alfred Adams to Mother, 13 August 1914. PR84/330, AWM.
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- 12 Nellie Fisher to John Balfour, 26 July 1915. PR87/027, AWM.
- 13 Frank Tate to James Barrett, 5 May 1915. 3DRL 250, Item 106, AWM.
- 14 Dr Felix Meyer to John Monash, 24 July 1915. MS1884, box 13, folder 113, NLA.
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## Doing it Tough: Life on the Rural Home Front

*Michael McKernan*

### **Abstract:**

*Rural home front history in Victoria has been under researched and especially the labour shortages caused by the war. The evidence suggests the Great War had a significant impact on rural areas not least because of the loss of manpower. Despite this toll, rural communities revealed a resilience made evident through acts of commemoration.*

There are some things that Charles Bean, the Australian official war correspondent and historian, got quite wrong. Fortunately there are not too many of them. Some of his blind spots related directly to his own obsessions and passions – Charles Bean, after all, was an historian. Some of his blind spots related to personalities. As is well known, he could never see beyond General Sir CBB Brudenell White, for example, believing him to be the outstanding leader of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF).<sup>1</sup> Bean seemed also too devoted to the idea that the great fighting and leadership qualities of the ordinary rank and file of the AIF came from the background of the force as made up of men largely from the bush.<sup>2</sup>

Most historians coming after Bean have contested this version of the legend of the bush.<sup>3</sup> The overwhelming majority of those who enlisted in the AIF in all the years across the war were from the cities and suburbs of Australia. Even a significant minority of the Australian Light Horse were city-bred and raised; and the Light Horse, of course, formed a tiny proportion of the Australian forces fighting overseas.

Perhaps Australian historians, concerned to correct Charles Bean's blind spot simply avoided any significant study of the home front in the bush. Only John McQuilton in his outstanding *Rural Australia and the Great War: from Tarrawingee to Tangambalanga* attempted a study of the war in the bush and, even so, his main title claims too much, as his is a study of the North-East of Victoria only.<sup>4</sup>

While it is argued that during the war the bush was 'doing it tough', it is not intended to claim that only those on the home front in the bush suffered. Too little is made of the immediate disruption to working lives everywhere in Australia when the news of war broke on a bewildered, unprepared but excited populace. When, on 8 October 1914, the federal parliament finally assembled at Spring Street after the 1914 double dissolution election and adjusted to the change on the Treasury benches, parliamentarians naturally wanted to talk about the war. The member for Ballarat, David McGrath, claimed that 'in the city that I represent, there are 5000 men begging for work and during the present week many women have told me that they and their children are starving'.<sup>5</sup>

As late as February 1917, Archbishop Mannix when opening a Christian Brothers' school in Brunswick, said that he worried about the decline in Australian trade, still continuing, and worried too for the 800 carpenters and joiners still searching for work: 'many of these men were over the military age and had sent their sons to the war. These men must walk the streets looking for work.' 'It was about time', he said, 'that the people faced the problem of unemployment – faced it fairly and squarely'.<sup>6</sup>

Doing it tough in the bush was perhaps the reverse of the unemployment that Mannix outlined. The problem in the bush was not unemployment but a crippling and permanent lack of labour. While it is difficult to quantify the precise loss of rural labour in Victoria during the war, because of the rudimentary nature of rural employment statistics, a close reading of rural newspapers shows the impact of the loss to each community of dozens of young men. Clearly, far too many men had left their jobs, left their family farms or properties to enlist, leaving rural industry in difficulties. Their labour was never replaced, or, if it was replaced, it was only partly and briefly so, by elderly men who came out of retirement, and also by the labour of women and children, for whom much of the work was unsuitable.<sup>7</sup> Wholesale and widespread recruitment and enlistment was the initial cause. Death and injury at the front caused the permanent loss of a skilled workforce.

The brief for my book *Victoria at War 1914-1918* (2014), commissioned by the State Library of Victoria, specified that I must look to Victoria broadly and must not write on Melbourne only.<sup>8</sup> As an historian of rural Australia, that would have been my instinct anyway. One device I developed in the book was to go as far west in the state as I



Boys ploughing at Wedderburn. Courtesy of State Library of Victoria, H87.52 168

could, and then as far east. That took me from Casterton in the west to Combiobar in the east (beyond Orbost) and many places in between.<sup>9</sup>

At Casterton, like many places, there was a rush to enlist. Casterton is one of the more pleasant towns in what was then one of the most affluent parts of Victoria, the Western District. Casterton is about 350 kilometres from Melbourne, so very remote in Victorian terms. It was in 1914 a town of more than 1000 inhabitants. The *Casterton News and the Merino and Sandford Record* of 24 August 1914 reported at length on a gathering held a few days earlier to farewell nine of its young men: to farewell them to war, that is. Fifteen days after the Governor-General read his telegram telling him that war had broken out in Europe, Casterton was already saying goodbye to some of its own. But Casterton was not alone. Hundreds of little towns across the length and breadth of Victoria were doing exactly the same thing in these first days of the European war.

We do not know the names of these men in Casterton's first contingent. However, the *Casterton News* was better informed about the second farewell for departing soldiers on 17 September, giving the names of all ten men leaving their loved ones. A recruiting officer must have visited Casterton because all the men enlisted on either 10 or 11

September. They were given just a few days to finalise their affairs before they left the town for Broadmeadows on Friday 18 September, six and a half weeks after the first news that war had broken out. Of those ten, two would never see Casterton again and another two would die in the early 1920s as a direct result of their war service. Many of the Casterton men were farm hands or labourers, although one was a wheelwright and another a saddler. If they talked about their farms and their bosses in the military camp at Broadmeadows, they might have wondered how the farms and stations could keep going with so many men off the land and in the tents waiting for war.<sup>10</sup>

Four of the ten men enlisting from Casterton in September 1914 died as a result of the war. We cannot know how many of the remaining six men came back home damaged in mind or body. One man did not even return to Australia at all. He was William Henry Brunt, a clerk, who was 22 years of age when he enlisted. Later he married in England and took his discharge in London. So five out of the rural workforce were permanently lost – that is, five of the ten recruits.<sup>11</sup> James Kelso Waters, one of the Casterton ten in the second wave of departure, was a 23-year-old farmer at Nareen when he enlisted. He joined the 4<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment and served on Gallipoli, being severely wounded in the knee in late November. A year and month later, almost to the day, James took his discharge from the AIF, his duty done. Possibly his labour was lost too given his injury, or perhaps he was permanently impaired for work. Thus, the Casterton district permanently lost at least half of the labour of its ten second wave of recruits.

Casterton's War Memorial records the names of 108 men from the district who were killed in the war. They, and their families, were the unlucky ones, particularly the Hurley family. Three boys from the Hurleys enlisted, including twins. Their father was a farmer on a property at Wurt Wurt Koort, near Henty, about 15 kilometres from Casterton. The Hurleys must have been a large family because there were three other children at least, at the local school and a son, Kevin, who was still at school in 1923. Tom Hurley was the first of the brothers to enlist, in December 1914. He was 23 years of age, unmarried and like both his brothers who served, a farm labourer. He and they probably worked on the family farm. Tom served on Gallipoli right at the 'fag end' of the campaign, landing on the Peninsula on 3 November 1915. Then Tom Hurley was in the Light Horse but he soon transferred to

the 2<sup>nd</sup> Pioneer Battalion. His twin brother Denis enlisted in July 1915 and was placed in the 46<sup>th</sup> Battalion. He arrived in France in June 1916 and was killed in action in August. Tom would have known of his twin brother's death well before he died of wounds received in Belgium in October 1917. The third Hurley brother, Jeremiah, nearly 25 years of age at enlistment, had joined up before Denis in May 1915. He was first posted to the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, but then was transferred to the 46<sup>th</sup> Battalion, presumably to be with his younger brother. On 13 July 1918 Jeremiah stopped a shell fragment, which hit him in the stomach, and he died of his wounds the same day. The Catholic priest at Casterton, Father Lowham, was burdened with three casualty telegrams over two years to deliver to the Hurley farm. The Hurley family, but particularly the parents Denis and Mary Jane, must have been overwhelmed by grief and sadness.

But there are other issues to consider. Think of the work of the farm at Wurt Wurt Koort. Rural work was then highly labour intensive. There was ploughing to do and sowing and reaping, all with horses. There was stock to manage, to muster, to move, to treat, to grow. Shearing and dipping and drenching had to be done. There was general maintenance as well. And there was much labour keeping all the fences in good order, making sure the water was plentiful and clean, managing the weeds and most importantly, keeping the rabbits down. Then there were the myriad odd jobs: taking stock to market, getting in supplies, making sure the book-keeping was up-to-date. Most of all, on a dairy farm there was the constancy and the drudgery of milking by hand: twice a day, every day, followed by the heavy lifting of the milk cans, the cleaning of the equipment and the management of the milking herd.

Probably the three Hurley men worked mostly alongside their father on their farm at Wurt Wurt Koort. If so, their enlistments and absence from the farm must have really damaged the work flow. But perhaps all three were not needed on the property all the time. If so, they would almost certainly have been working in the district, for it seems that these three sons were all living at home. Their labour was now unavailable to other farmers. Also, the boys would have been paying their mother board if they worked off the farm and though they might have allotted their mother a part of their AIF pay, cash might have been scarce around the place after their departure. There were younger brothers and sisters able to take their places, and this applied

to many families. But the fact remains that one of the first and greatest consequences of the war for rural Victoria was the sudden and dramatic withdrawal of an extraordinarily high amount of young and energetic farm labour. Older men were suddenly working very much harder; women, girls and boys were also drilled into service. The war hit rural Victoria first and hardest.

If we focus only on the first days of the war, we miss the grind and the constancy of the four-and-a-half years of armed conflict and the awful business of trying to keep rural businesses and properties viable without the labour on which so many depended. The story of another remarkable Victorian family shows the continuing impact across the four years of war on individual lives and the community.

John Pringle Neyland was born in Berwick, Scotland, in 1851, the year he also arrived in the colony of Victoria, as a baby. In 1874 he took up land at Corack, about 25 kilometres from Birchip in the Wimmera, and he later moved to Birchip. He was a shire councillor from 1897 to 1906 and was also shire president. At some stage he married Margaret Niven. It proved a very fertile marriage and the pair produced eight sons and four daughters. There was plenty of labour around the Neyland farm, therefore, and also around the house in this family. They were solid citizens, well-respected, and likely to be prosperous, despite all those mouths to feed.<sup>12</sup> Niven Neyland was the first of the brothers to enlist on the last day of 1914, just a little more than four months after war had been declared. He was 36 years of age and married. Thereafter his brothers streamed into the AIF, all eight of them, although Percy, 31 years of age, was rejected for service due to an arm damaged in a farm accident.

Remarkably, only one son was killed in action. James Neyland, 36 and single, was working in South Africa when the war broke out. Expecting that the AIF would soon reach England, James must have thought it more sensible to head straight for the old Home country and enlist in the AIF in London, rather than take all that time to get back to Victoria. But James was in England well before the AIF ever got there, so they put him in the Lovat Scout Regiment (for, after all, his father was Scottish). James Neyland was killed on the Western Front on 9 April 1917. He was buried in the Highland Cemetery, just outside of Arras in France.



**Peace Day Celebrations**, Back Creek School, Yackandandah, 1918. Courtesy of Noel Jackling, copy RHSV Collection

However, two other Neylands died in the 1920s, almost certainly from their war wounds, and at least one other was severely wounded, but survived. When Percy, the only son who was rejected for service married in October 1917, the first of the toasts at the wedding breakfast was to ‘The Brave Boys in the Trenches’. The newly joined family members were not only raising their glasses to his seven bothers; for his new wife, Margaret, had two brothers in the AIF, one of them killed in France.

The Neyland farm clearly suffered from a severe labour shortage. In late 1917, one of the seven sons at war, Earl Sydney Neyland, sought a discharge from the AIF on compassionate grounds. He had enlisted in March 1915 and had joined the 9<sup>th</sup> Light Horse. He was 25 years of age when he enlisted and single. He served on Gallipoli, on the Sinai Peninsula and in Palestine, and lost the sight of his right eye through his service. He wrote that ‘the affairs of our property have lapsed into a hopeless muddle’ with all but one of his brothers at war, and ‘as my father has met with a serious accident permanently injuring him’. His father had in fact broken his leg in ‘a vehicular accident’. The Defence Department sent a local Birchip policeman, Senior Constable Peet, around to the farm to verify the facts. It was indeed true, he reported, that there were seven brothers at war. Their mother had taken over the Star Bakery in Birchip bakery in 1916, in an attempt to provide some off-farm income, but there was no doubt that ‘the family is not in a good

financial position. Defence approved Earl's request for release and he was returned to Australia and discharged in Melbourne in March 1918.

John Pringle Neyland, the patriarch of this mighty tribe, had a heart attack while riding his horse near Charlton and was discovered dead on the ground in late November 1918. He had the satisfaction of knowing that peace had broken out and that his sons were part of a victorious army. But he was not there to greet all of them on their return home. Who can say what role John Pringle Neyland had played in encouraging his sons into the fight? Surely love of country and sense of duty played some role in sending the Neylands to the war. He certainly did not think of the family farm, which suffered a dramatic loss of labour.

Doing it tough in the bush clearly has wider implications than enlistment, death and wounds. As we have seen farm labour was drastically short and the community suffered through the loss of labour. Besides that, there was the loss of young men from the football and cricket clubs, the Sunday schools and churches, other clubs in the town, and the pubs and dances. The whole community suffered from the absence and then loss of their young men and in some cases, young women who became nurses.

Some townspeople were driven by a sense of community and responsibility to the young men at the front and felt impelled to work in another endeavour or industry besides feeding and providing for their own family and working around the farm as much as they could. Again Birchip provides examples of that intense work load.

The women of Birchip, to give but one example, the Red Cross women that is, ran a regular Saturday afternoon tea in the local Mechanics Institute. All week the women baked cakes and scones and other delicacies. On Saturdays they cut dainty sandwiches, decorated and set their tables and heated the water for the teas. It might seem a somewhat small-scale operation but the women of Birchip raised a great deal of money. So much, in fact, that they were able to fully fund a complete operating theatre at the Military Hospital at Caulfield, and fit it with all the very latest equipment. The authorities spent more than £2000 on the theatre, which the wife of the Governor-General, Lady Helen Munro Ferguson, opened, speaking with praise and pride of the Birchip Red Cross. Hundreds of other branches across Victoria were doing equally successful work. In Casterton the local Red Cross branch had 29 office-bearers (all but one of them married women) and the only

males mentioned in the annual report were the two honorary auditors. With 29 office-bearers, the total membership of the branch was large.<sup>13</sup>

These great combined efforts were mitigated somewhat by the great political divide caused by conscription debates, which probably caused as much havoc in the bush as it did in the cities. When Casterton farewelled its first recruits in the Oddfellows Hall, all representatives of the Christian churches were present and spoke. Father Lowham, the Catholic priest, said 'they were fighting in a just war and it behoved every man to play his part for the Empire.' When news of peace arrived at Casterton on the night of 11 November 1918, an impromptu stage was erected in the main street for speeches as part of the joyous celebrations. Again, representatives of the Christian churches spoke. Only Father Lowham was now missing. He did not speak although he was still parish priest of Casterton. Was he not invited to the gathering? Did he feel that he could not attend the celebrations, given the deep unpopularity of his church in some sections of the community? Did he no longer feel that the end of the war was a cause for celebration? It is one of the frustrations of history that we cannot know the answer to these questions.

Despite the strains and difficulties in the bush during the years of war, the sense of community survived, based on the commonality of the experience of grief. Father Lowham, like the Anglican Reverend Stillwell and the Presbyterian Reverend Meers, had been out and about in his district delivering casualty telegrams – that is telegrams telling of death at the front – to his parishioners. Three of them went to Denis and Mary Jane Hurley at Wurt Wurt Koort, who later received their sons' few possessions. Two of the three boys had religious emblems among their possessions, crucifixes, scapulars, religious medallions, possibly blessed by Father Lowham before departure.<sup>14</sup>

A wider and more comprehensive history than mine would have carried the story into what I called in one of my first books, 'the grey years' to encompass the fate of the returning men and their families, their ability or otherwise to settle down into their families, communities and former callings.<sup>15</sup> Such a history would deal with the hospitals and hostels that sprang up around the state to care for the masses of severely wounded men now returning home. It would deal also with the commemoration industry that grew up, culminating in Melbourne's mighty Shrine of Remembrance, at last opened on 11 November 1934.

Despite the war's impact on the rural workforce, the community proved resilient and quickly embarked on communal efforts at memorialisation. Travellers in the Western District may pass through the small village of Merino, on a route between Casterton and Hamilton. Typically, the village boasts a prominent war memorial in a small park on the side of the main road. The memorial is in the form of a plinth, but unusually so, has a flagpole at the top of the plinth, with a flag hoisted to half-mast on Anzac Day and Remembrance Day. The Merino memorial's foundation stone informs the visitor that the memorial was unveiled, or inaugurated, by the Governor of Victoria, Sir Arthur Stanley, on 28 December 1918.

This is remarkable. The citizens of the village had compiled the names of the men and women of the district who had fought in the war and the names of those who had been killed, within weeks of the declaration of the Armistice. They had raised the money and engaged an architect or designer for their memorial and had secured the services of a stonemason and builder, all within weeks of the outbreak of peace. Then they had also arranged for the State Governor to visit their village and inaugurate their memorial three days after Christmas, and just forty-seven days since the guns fell silent and the horror ended. The speed of this indicates an intense loyalty and love of their own soldiers and nurses in the village and region of Merino and a determination that the rest of the state would know of their achievements. Indeed some memorials to the war dead were commenced while the war itself continued but most of these are to be found in churches.<sup>16</sup> Merino, it might seem, must have been among the first with its official open-air memorial created so quickly after the war had ended.<sup>17</sup>

Other places moved with less urgency to commemorate their war dead but almost every Victorian village and town would eventually erect a memorial in the following decade as Ken Inglis has shown in his wonderful book *Sacred Places* (1998). Too often visitors or townfolk now look on these memorials without knowing much of the story attached to them. Probably each such memorial now has something distinctive about it, which would open to us a better understanding of the impact of war in the villages, towns and suburbs of Victoria.

There is much to be learned, for example, in the story of the peace memorial at Geelong. Geelong, of course, is a prominent city at the entrance to the Western District. It opened its grand peace memorial

in Johnstone Park in October 1926. Arriving in Victoria only in June 1926, the Governor, Lord Somers, spent much of his five years in office opening memorials around the state. He was well equipped and dedicated for the task, having twice been wounded at Ypres, and was awarded the Military Cross and the Distinguished Service Order for his service in the war.<sup>18</sup>

Before opening the memorial at Geelong, Lord Somers received a briefing about the city's war effort. In it he read that the citizens of Geelong had raised £23,000 to build the Peace Memorial, of which £8,500 was paid to widows of soldiers killed in action to enable each of them to purchase a home. Geelong had a population during the war of about 35,000, people of whom about 3000 served overseas. Throughout the war Geelong raised £150,000 in cash for War Funds. Citizens provided two ambulances for use in France, a YMCA hut, and they equipped, out of their own pockets, the Geelong Military Camp. Women worked continuously throughout the war for the Red Cross and the Comforts Fund, sending a huge quantity of clothing to the central depots. Each Geelong man at war received a Christmas Billy annually. As each returned to Geelong from the war he was met by a Citizens' Committee headed by the mayor and driven by car to his home. After the war the citizens purchased the Old Union Bank building as a club for returned soldiers.<sup>19</sup> Of course Geelong is not the bush, but the extraordinary achievement there reminds us of a similar effort in the region of which Geelong was a principal city.

Strathbogie in central Victoria was typical of many Victorian towns. In this small centre, consisting of a main street and a few side streets, a memorial exists to those who died in the First World War and those who returned. Visitors would expect to find a memorial at Strathbogie; almost every Victorian town and village has one. But the numbers recorded at Strathbogie might cause some surprise. Twenty men from the district were killed at war; while thirty-three returned tried to resume their lives – a casualty rate of thirty-six per cent. The proportions are sobering, but so is the scale of enlistment and loss for this remote and tiny place.

A traveller who reaches the top of Mt Wombat near Strathbogie in north-eastern Victoria will be rewarded with a fine view of the country below. The visitor can see on a good day, as a plaque at the summit announces, about one-quarter of the total land mass of the

state of Victoria. This should remind the climber what a small state, in Australian terms, Victoria really is. Victoria is not a large land mass, but its people gave generously and nobly to a cause that had dominated Victorian society for four years.<sup>20</sup>

In writing on Victoria in the war I had to ask myself if there was something different about the Victorian response to the war from that of the other states. Though I don't say this explicitly in my book, *Victoria at War*, as that would be too boastful for we Victorians – I think the difference is that Victorians showed a deeper sense of civic patriotism than those Australians living elsewhere. This civic patriotism was as much alive in the bush, if not more so, than in the big cities. It is only a slight difference in degree, because enlistment was strong in all of the states and fund-raising was successful everywhere too. But Victorian schoolchildren, for example, did raise more money than schoolchildren in other states. In Victoria the war seemed to have a stronger claim on the lives of most citizens.

Charles Bean may have over-emphasised the contribution of the bush to the AIF in numerical terms. In Victorian terms the bush did it tough in loss of life, in the loss of young men's involvement in the community, in loss of vital labour, in loss of time and leisure. But doing it tough has always been the way in the bush. Mrs Annie Whitelaw lost four of her six sons who all enlisted in the war. On her headstone in the cemetery at the little Gippsland village of Briagalong, it is written: 'happy is she who can die with the thought that in her country's greatest need she gave her utmost.'<sup>21</sup>

#### NOTES

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## 'Heartstrings Aching for the Absent Boy': Years of Anguish—the Losses Of War

Ross McMullin

### **Abstract:**

*This article is a revised version of a paper delivered at the RHSV's conference on Victorians and the Home Front during the Great War. It analyses the impact of the ghastly losses endured by Victorians, and provides a number of illuminating case studies. The anguish of loss was felt in a variety of ways.*

In August 2014 the centenary of the start of the Great War was commemorated in numerous events, including the conference that generated the articles in this issue of the *Victorian Historical Journal*. But it was not just the anniversary of the outbreak of the conflict that made early August a strikingly appropriate time to reflect on Victorian losses during the war. Many Victorian casualties resulted from the offensive at Gallipoli in early August 1915, notably at Lone Pine and the Nek. Early August 1916 was the middle of one of the worst months in Australian history, when immense casualties were being amassed in repeated attacks at Pozieres. And in early August 1918 Australians spearheaded an immense assault that was so comprehensively successful that General Ludendorff concluded that only one side could now win the war, and it was not his. But another result of this decisive assault was, inevitably, many more Victorian losses. Moreover, in early August 1917 artillerymen in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) were being hammered at Ypres and incurring substantial casualties. And while that was happening numerous Victorian families were still struggling to cope with the aftermath of the disaster of Fromelles. This was the utterly futile attack on 19 July 1916 that produced in one catastrophic night 5,533 Australian casualties—dead, wounded, taken prisoner, or missing. A large proportion of these casualties were Victorians, perhaps as many as 40 per cent. There were a lot of Victorians missing after Fromelles. Many of them were still classified as missing over a year later. Early in August 1917, then, many Victorians were still in desperate anguish

about their soldier's fate, clinging grimly to the faint hope that he might have somehow survived that fiasco more than twelve months earlier.

### Personal Loss and Anguish

How did the bereaved at home cope in these circumstances? Some, of course, did not. A stark example concerned the family of a talented 22-year-old officer, Major Tom Elliott, who was originally from Sydney, excelled at Duntroon Military College, and distinguished himself in the AIF in a Victorian unit before becoming a casualty at Fromelles. His mother, Mary Elliott, was officially informed that Tom was wounded, then officially informed that he was missing, and only later officially informed that he was dead. She concluded from this sequence of events that the authorities were not certain about Tom's fate, so she kept hoping that he might be alive. To Mary, abandoning hope meant abandoning him. She kept pressing the authorities for clarification: 'it is an awful thing to leave a mother in doubt (*sic*) ... the suspense is awful', she told them. 'I can't make anything of the war but that it is wrong, wrong, wrong, from beginning to end'.<sup>1</sup>

The strain, the relentless suspense, was overwhelming. Mary struggled to cope. She resorted to alcohol, and beer became her crutch though she did not like it much. As she wrote, 'it saved me from going mad when I was terribly depressed and worried'.<sup>2</sup> But then she began to have delusions about Tom. Eventually she was placed in an asylum for the insane. She died there of Spanish Flu in mid-1919.

Tom's brigadier, General 'Pompey' Elliott, knew Tom for only four months. In that time he formed the view that Tom was the finest natural soldier he had ever met, and an officer of immense potential who would be crucial to Australia's future. Pompey kept describing Tom as potentially an Australian Kitchener, which was an extraordinary accolade in the context of Kitchener's immense prestige in 1916; moreover, Pompey was an insightful assessor, and not one to throw around compliments lightly. When Pompey concluded—correctly—that the proposed attack at Fromelles would prove a disaster, he even tried to keep Tom out of the battle because he believed he was so precious to Australia's future. But Tom ended up participating at Fromelles, and he was killed.

The story of Tom Elliott and his family is told in my book *Farewell, Dear People: Biographies of Australia's Lost Generation*.<sup>3</sup> So too are other stories in this article. When Tom died he was second-in-command of the

60<sup>th</sup> AIF Battalion. The commander of that unit was Geoff McCrae, who was killed—like Tom—leading his men forward at Fromelles. McCrae also exemplifies the many gifted among Australia's lost generation of World War I, and the story of his life is another of the extended biographies in *Farewell, Dear People*.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the book's title comes from Geoff's final letter home on the day of the battle of Fromelles:



Geoff McCrae (Barbara Blomfield)

Today I lead my Battalion in an assault on the German lines, and I pray to God I may come through alright and bring honour to our name. If not, I will at least have laid down my life for you and my country which is the greatest privilege one can ask for. Farewell, dear people, the hour approacheth.<sup>5</sup>

A few hours later Geoff McCrae was dead.

He was a product of Melbourne's best-known creative dynasty—his grandmother was Georgiana McCrae. His father, George, was a noted poet who also wrote prose and liked sketching. Geoff and George were particularly close. When Geoff was young, tall George and small Geoff were often seen happily together with their fingers intertwined.

The story of the McCraes' bereavement was very different from the uncertainty that Tom Elliott's family had to endure. There was no doubt about Geoff's fate at Fromelles. His body was collected for burial in a nearby cemetery.

Geoff died when he was only 26, whereas George was then 83. George's long life of personal and intellectual fulfilment contrasted with the abbreviated span of his youngest son. In 1916 George still had another decade and more of alert life ahead of him. He devoted much of it to commemorating Geoff.

This obsessive devotion reflected the intensity of the father's never-ending grief. It was as if he could in some way maintain the connection of those intertwined fingers by turning Geoff's bedroom into a perpetual shrine, by cherishing his medals and mementos, by installing

a memorial window (at their local church in Hawthorn), by compiling commemorative verse, by seeking his personal effects, by sketching his faraway grave, by locating the cemetery site, by pursuing posthumous awards, and by spending hours and hours transcribing Geoff's wartime diary and letters—even re-sketching the accompanying drawings.

Geoff's sister Dorothy was another of the McCrae poets. At the start of the war she wrote a series of poems about enlistment, departure and the anxiety of severance. These poems unequivocally upheld the righteousness of the cause. Published as a collection with the title *Soldier, My Soldier!* they captured the mood of the moment, and were popular with soldiers and those they left behind. Dorothy did not hide the identity of her soldier; she dedicated the book to Geoff and included a poem called 'Geoffrey', which disclosed that when he enlisted the McCraes had been 'smitten down by grief'.<sup>6</sup>

In 1915 another volume of Dorothy's verse was published entitled *The Clear Call*. It included a poem called 'Tribute', which eulogised the deaths of Australian soldiers: 'Oh noble end! Glad sacrifice!' Such a gallant death, her poem claimed, could assuage the grief of the bereaved: 'Pride dries the tears in yearning eyes.'<sup>7</sup> Geoff's death epitomised the kind of heroic sacrifice that Dorothy had in mind as a poet. But she felt very differently as a sister. When her soldier died, her tears were not dried. She suffered from depression for the rest of her life.

On 6 August 1915 three officers from Bendigo shared a special meal at Gallipoli. One of them, 24-year-old Lieutenant Gil Dyett, had just received from a friend in Egypt a collection of preserved fruit and other delicacies, which constituted a sumptuous contrast to their usual diet of unappealing bully beef and teeth-shattering biscuits.

Dyett, who had arrived at Gallipoli in June with a batch of reinforcements, invited two fellow lieutenants from Bendigo, Noel Edwards and 'Curly' Symons, to consume these delicacies with him. Both Edwards and Symons had enlisted at the start of the war, and had been promoted from the ranks after distinguishing themselves in action. As they tucked into Dyett's pears, cherries and figs, they discussed the imminent August offensive at Gallipoli. All three admitted that they did not expect to survive it.<sup>8</sup>

Not long afterwards their battalion was directed to the ferocious fighting at Lone Pine. Noel Edwards, a revered and inspirational officer, was again exceptional until an enemy bullet found him. Dyett was hit too. Gravely wounded with concussion and multiple serious injuries

including spinal damage, he was carried down to the beach, where his lifelessness resulted in a blanket being placed reverently over him prior to burial. Then someone noticed him move.

Meanwhile Curly Symons was summoned by his colonel, Pompey Elliott, who sent him to a vulnerable spot, where numerous others had been hit, with this heartfelt exhortation: 'Goodbye Symons, I don't expect to see you again, but we must not lose that post.'<sup>9</sup> Symons shook hands, saluted, and led his party of men away, only to be immediately bowled over by an exploding bomb, which would have maimed him if a comrade had not managed to curb its impact by flinging a couple of sandbags on it just in time. Symons picked himself up and continued on towards the vulnerable post.

Elliott did end up seeing Symons again. The Eaglehawk-born lieutenant survived the inferno at Lone Pine, unlike many others, and for the gallantry he displayed in ensuring that post was retained he was awarded the Victoria Cross. The men with Noel Edwards thought he should have been awarded a posthumous VC as well, but that did not eventuate. Gil Dyett survived—just as well someone saw that blanket move—returned to Bendigo to recuperate, and eventually became national president of the organisation now known as the Returned and Services League (RSL) for 27 years.

Harold Edwards, Noel's brother, enlisted and was on the scene north of Villers-Bretonneux when the famous Baron von Richthofen was shot down by Australian machine-gunners in 1918. Harold survived the war, and much else—he died at the age of 102. His mother, Blanche, was delighted by Harold's safe return from the war, but she wrote a poem after the Armistice that underlined her enduring grief about Noel's death at Lone Pine three years earlier:

How I shall miss him when from oversea  
The Anzacs come amid shouts of victory;  
When eager voices answering smiles awake  
And hands press hands for old remembrance sake.  
Full many a face will wear a mask of joy,  
With heartstrings aching for the absent boy.<sup>10</sup>

This poignant verse from the mother of a brilliant but little-known officer, who was reputedly the first to enlist in Bendigo, encapsulated

widespread sentiment, the last line in particular—‘heartstrings aching for the absent boy’.

These were years of anguish. Worrying about your soldier being in or near a danger zone and hoping he was still all right. Being notified that your soldier was officially classified as missing, and the anguish of desperately hoping that he might somehow have survived—Mary Elliott. The anguish of bereavement, the torment that never subsided—George McCrae, Blanche Edwards, in fact much of the population of Victoria.

Perhaps the best-known example of an anguished, grief-stricken Victorian is H.B. Higgins. Henry Higgins was publicly prominent in politics and the law, and widely admired for his principled adherence to progressive ideals. He was immensely fond and proud of his son Mervyn, who was his only child. Mervyn managed to survive the notorious charge at the Nek, but was killed at Maghdaba in December 1916. The widespread awareness of Henry’s profound emotional investment in Mervyn and his future accentuated the pronounced gloom and sense of dread that the news of this particular casualty engendered.

That these empathetic sentiments were spot on was confirmed by Henry Higgins himself. ‘My grief has condemned me to hard labour for the rest of my life’, he admitted. He became ‘preoccupied’ with the tragedy that a generation of young men of ‘high character’ was being sacrificed to ‘re-create a world’ that they ‘had not been responsible for shattering’.<sup>11</sup>

### The National Loss

Higgins was not only consumed by his paternal grief for Mervyn. He was also gripped by another kind of anguish, stemming from the realisation that some of these losses were irreplaceable—not just irreplaceable to their immediate families and loved ones, but irreplaceable more broadly. All the dead are equal in their ultimate fate, of course, and to highlight the reality that some were simply irreplaceable in a broader context is not to detract from that fundamental truth that they were all equal in death. It did not take long after the Gallipoli landing for awareness to spread that the new nation was losing Australians of exceptional talent whose loss was irreplaceable.

### Clunes Mathison

A striking example in Victoria was Clunes Mathison.<sup>12</sup> He was a marvel, the Florey or Macfarlane Burnet or Gus Nossal that Australia missed out on, because he was fatally wounded early at Gallipoli aged 31 while serving as a battalion doctor.



**Clunes Mathison** (Walter and Eliza Hall Institute)

Mathison had already established himself as an internationally acclaimed medical researcher after growing up in Victoria. He received the most glowing accolades from medical scientists of the highest international renown. Among them was Charles Martin, a revered physiologist and pathologist who was the director of the Lister Institute in London: ‘No man I have ever known possesses the genius for research so highly as Mathison. He always seems to know by instinct the essential difficulties of a problem and how to tackle them’.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, Mathison was a revered personality as well as a renowned researcher. ‘Barney’ Allen, who knew him well at Melbourne University, put it this way:

Of Dr Mathison as a scientist, let others speak. I speak of him as a friend, and as a friend he was wonderful ... He never flagged: the variety of his interests was remarkable. I have been with him on all sorts of occasions ... yarning, cricketing, camping, canoeing, fishing, ski-running—and it was always the same: whether it was a question of scientific knowledge, or of academic diplomacy, or the value of a book or a picture or a piece of music, or the fastening of a ski-binding, it was always “Ask Mathie” ... His cheery, chubby figure was welcome everywhere; he knew every Professor and every policeman in London, and was equally at home hobnobbing with either.<sup>14</sup>

Mathison’s parents were both schoolteachers, and widely admired. They had six children, but Clunes was the only one to reach the age of 10. Furthermore, his father died painfully at home of illness when Clunes was 12. He clearly experienced a great deal of death and suffering in his

family during his childhood. Considering that he had such wide-ranging interests across the humanities as well as the sciences, the conclusion seems inescapable that the sickness and sadness around him as he grew up influenced his decision to pursue a career as a researcher of medical science. Essentially, what he felt driven to do was to make scientific discoveries that would help sick people get better.

And he was remarkably good at it. As Professor W.A. Osborne of Melbourne University put it, each topic Mathison 'took up he knew inside out ... He seemed to know where every investigator resided, what his facilities were, what his capacity was, and what he was doing at that particular time. And this not true only of physiology and allied sciences, but of pathology, medicine and surgery'.<sup>15</sup>

In April 1915, at the very time Mathison was preparing for the Gallipoli landing, he was appointed the inaugural director of the newly established Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of medical research in Melbourne, a position tailor-made for his unique talents. Mathison landed at Gallipoli with his battalion on 25 April 1915, and performed magnificently in the chaos of the first few days. He was cheerful and brave, capable and irrepressible.

Early in May the 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF Brigade was transferred south to Helles, and ordered to charge towards the village of Krithia. These Victorians dashed forward with extraordinary bravery against a hail of Turkish bullets as intense as any rifle and machine-gun fire that the AIF encountered in the whole war. Enthralled observers likened it to the legendary Charge of the Light Brigade. Inevitably, though, casualties were devastating. The medical personnel were flat out. Again, Mathison's assiduous and courageous contribution in the forward area during the ghastly aftermath for the AIF was long remembered. He made it known that 'wherever I am wanted, just tell me, and I will try to go'.<sup>16</sup>

Next day, though, a Turkish bullet found him. It was fired from afar, not aimed specifically at him, but happened to strike his head, and he lost consciousness immediately. He was carried to a hospital ship, but his wound proved fatal, and he died on 18 May. So a unique genius precious to Australia was thrown away in an utterly senseless operation, and the initial director of the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute never took up the position.

The tributes to Mathison contained extraordinary accolades. An internationally renowned British professor, E.H. Starling, was referring

to Mathison's death when he wrote that 'for the science of medicine throughout the world, the loss is irreparable'.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, the (London) *Times History of the War* lamented Mathison's death as the loss of 'a life which had been judged infinitely precious'.<sup>18</sup>

It was, of course, 'an overwhelming calamity' for his mother.<sup>19</sup> Mary Mathison had been an exceptional teacher in various Victorian state schools. She was 'as near to perfection as is humanly possible', a departmental inspector declared; 'I know of no better teacher'.<sup>20</sup> But she had endured more than her share of sorrow, with five of her children dying young and her husband dying prematurely as well. Even so, the death of her brilliant son was the most terrible blow of all, resulting in 'the most desolate hours of my life'.<sup>21</sup>

Mathison's friends and admirers in Melbourne decided to commemorate him by funding the establishment of recurring memorial lectures in medical science. In 1947 the lecturer was Reginald Webster, who had worked alongside Mathison in 1913. Webster captured his essence admirably, describing Mathie as 'a man of brilliant attainments, radiant promise and endearing personality'.<sup>22</sup> It was Macfarlane Burnet's turn in 1953. He depicted Mathison as an Australian equivalent of Rupert Brooke.

### Robert Bage



Bob Bage (Mitchell Library)

Robert Bage had much in common with Mathison. They overlapped at Melbourne University, where they knew each other and had many mutual friends. Bage, like Mathison, followed a fine university degree with conspicuous achievement, and—again like Mathison—enlisted in the first month of the war. Bage was a talented engineer who became a senior colleague of Douglas Mawson at Antarctica and performed outstandingly there, but he is another who is practically unknown today.<sup>23</sup>

Mawson's expeditioners, having based themselves at the windiest place on the planet, came to know each other very well while they were cooped up in their hut as the blizzards swirled around them. Among Bage's comrades was John Hunter, a scientist from Sydney, who did not know Bage before their time together at Antarctica. Hunter quickly developed a very high regard for Bage, as his diary attests:

Bob Bage ... is the best liked man on the expedition and personally I think he is the best man we have. He is an untiring worker ... ever ready to help anybody. Personally he is a fine fellow and of jovial spirit and smiling countenance ... [T]here is no one that I have met that I have greater respect for than Bob: in fact he is an ideal fellow and I hope our friendship will long continue.<sup>24</sup>

After they had endured months of ferocious blizzards, Mawson arranged for his men to embark on various exploring operations, and he placed Bage in charge of a particularly daunting sledging expedition. Despite encountering the most violent hurricanes, Bage and his two colleagues ventured more than 300 miles south across rough terrain where no one had been before. Along the way they made regular geographical, meteorological and magnetic measurements, because they were exploring to gain new knowledge and understanding; they were in fact not far from the South Pole, but as far as they were concerned this was not a superficial exercise of getting to some target just for what they saw as the shallow glory of being the first to plant a flag there. They were doing it for scientific research. It was an exceedingly dangerous expedition, and Bage and his comrades only just managed to survive their harrowing return journey. But their remarkable feat was little known at the time, and it is even less known now.

All the sledging expeditions returned to the hut that was the home base for Mawson's men within a couple of days of Mawson's deadline,

except one—the three-man party led by Mawson himself. The ship that was to take all the expeditioners back to Australia, the *Aurora*, had arrived with its irascible captain, J.K. Davis. He was known as Gloomy Davis, but his concern about delay was understandable, as ships had limited seasonal scope to manoeuvre in these icy waters. Several days later, with Davis increasingly tense and still no sign of Mawson, six expeditioners, including Bage, were selected to stay on for another winter in case Mawson's party belatedly turned up. Eventually Davis decided he could not wait any longer and the *Aurora* departed, only for Mawson to materialise later *that very day* in an emaciated state with the harrowing news that the two comrades with him had died. Those remaining managed to send a wireless message to the *Aurora* asking for it to return, which it did—with great reluctance from Gloomy Davis—but the sea was too wild for Mawson, Bage and the others to be collected. They were waiting on the shore knowing that Davis would be growing increasingly agitated about this further delay. In the end he decided he could linger no longer, and the *Aurora* departed again.

So the hopes of Bage and his shore-based companions were shattered. They had to endure another year of isolation—and limited amenities, unvaried food, apocalyptic weather, and no women—before they could be collected. A sinister surprise further drained morale when one of them went mad. Bage became wary of even conversing in the hut, as this troubled colleague would bizarrely misinterpret even the most innocuous remarks.

When the *Aurora* reappeared all those months later in December 1913, the jubilation ashore was understandably intense. Bage was thrilled to be really going home this time after more than two years of outstanding service to Australia at Antarctica. Their arrival in Australia in February 1914 was a celebrated event. Bage returned to the family home in East St Kilda.

Six months later, when Australia found itself at war, Bage enlisted straightaway. Now 26, he became the deputy leader of one of the original companies of engineers, and landed with his men on 25 April 1915. During the chaos of the first few days ashore Bage and his company did the kind of things that engineers did—they widened roads, strengthened trenches, constructed loopholes, excavated emplacements for the artillery, and so on. Bage spent the morning of 7 May surveying. The young men with him paused for a bit of lunch. Bage strolled to the

adjacent AIF position, perhaps intent on getting something to eat there himself. As it happened, the commander of the AIF's 1st Division, Major-General William Bridges, was there. Bridges had been appraising the tactical options in the local area, and had just come to a decision about what he wanted. When Bage materialised along the trench, Bridges blurted out 'Here's the man!'<sup>25</sup>

Bage was startled. He was not used to being addressed in such fashion by a major-general. But then he found out why he was the man, and he became seriously perturbed. Bridges had decided that he wanted the infantry to occupy a forward post, and he wanted a reliable engineer to mark out the position beforehand, so that the infantry would know exactly where Bridges wanted them to dig in. And Bage of course fitted the description reliable engineer exactly, which was why Bridges had declared 'Here's the man!'

However, what Bridges desired would involve Bage venturing out 150 yards in front of the existing Anzac position and banging in some marker pegs in view of the Turks—and Bridges wanted this done straightaway. Bage respectfully pointed out that this would be a very risky undertaking, and the best chance of carrying it out effectively would be to do it at night. But Bridges was adamant. He wanted it done that afternoon—that is, in broad daylight and in full view of the Turks.

Bob Bage was a loyal officer. He knew that an order was an order. Bage was also a highly capable and insightful officer. He was well aware that his prospects of surviving such a venture were slim. He resigned himself to his probable fate, and arranged for the dispersal of his belongings.

Bage did his utmost to carry out the task. He was hammering in a marker peg where Bridges wanted when he was killed by a fusillade of fire from numerous Turkish riflemen and at least five machine-guns.

News of Bage's death reached Australia unofficially well before his family was notified officially. The delay in the official confirmation exacerbated the distress of his mother, Mary Bage, in particular. 'His death is a great loss to Australia,' Douglas Mawson declared.<sup>26</sup>

Australians have tended to be critical of incompetent British generals whose ineptitude led to the deaths of regrettably many Australians—understandably critical, in the case of commanders like General Haking, who was culpable for the death of Geoff McCrae and thousands of others at Fromelles in the worst 24 hours in Australian

history, and also General Hunter-Weston, who was culpable for the appalling fiasco at Krithia that resulted in the death of the irreplaceable Clunes Mathison. But what happened to Bob Bage at Gallipoli on 7 May 1915, when his life was cavalierly imperilled by General Bridges and he predictably died, confirms that inept decisions by generals that led to the deaths of Australians with the most outstanding potential were made by AIF commanders sometimes as well as by British ones.

### **Harold Wanliss and George Challis**

Some observers well placed to evaluate Australian soldiers with such potential concluded that an officer from Ballarat was second to none. Harold Wanliss was a talented and inspirational leader who was so dedicated to his nation's future that while on leave he had intensively researched new industries suitable for post-war Australia and for its disabled soldiers. Some admirers sensed he was destined to become prime minister.

Harold's father, Newton Wanliss, was a devoted parent, not unlike Henry Higgins in that he was also a lawyer with a profound emotional investment in the expansive future of his only son. He was much less publicly known than Higgins, but no less devastated by grief when Harold was killed in September 1917. Newton felt impelled to research and write a history of Harold's battalion as a tribute to him, and it proved to be of such impressive quality that no better history of any Australian unit was published between the world wars.

A year before Harold Wanliss's death, the news of a certain fatality had caused profound anguish around Melbourne. This was confirmed even in interstate newspapers. The Adelaide *Advertiser* reported that 'Expressions of regret were heard yesterday all over Melbourne when it became known that George Challis had fallen in France.'<sup>27</sup>

George Challis<sup>28</sup> was a household name because of his popularity and exploits as a footballer for Carlton in the Victorian Football League (VFL), the main suburban competition in Melbourne. He was admired for his pace and grace, his dashing skills, and the attractive way he played the game. His sunny nature was evident—during matches he was often seen smiling. The VFL was already very popular; indeed it was estimated that before the war no fewer than one in every ten men, women and children in Melbourne attended a VFL match each Saturday afternoon.

Challis was widely liked, and not only by Carlton supporters. He had tried to enlist at the start of the war, but was ruled ineligible by the

medical authorities because one of his toes curled up over its next-door neighbour. Football enthusiasts understandably regarded this rejection as ludicrous, bearing in mind that this unorthodox toe had neither perturbed him nor prevented him from becoming one of the fastest and most brilliant footballers in the nation.

The aftermath confirmed the absurdity of his military rejection. After being ruled out by the army doctors, Challis lined up for Carlton again in 1915 and proceeded to enjoy his best season. Carlton ended up winning the premiership, and if there had been a prestigious medal in 1915 for the best player in the Grand Final, as there is now, it might well have gone to Challis.

Meanwhile, he had kept trying to enlist. With medical standards becoming more flexible in response to the increasing need for reinforcements after the casualties at Gallipoli, Challis was eventually accepted. He left Australia not long after the 1915 Grand Final.

Challis's war experience was brief. Just a few days after his unit made its front-line debut, a big long-range shell killed him. There was not much of him left to bury. But admirers of the battalion favourite ensured that he would at least have a grave by collecting what they could of his remains in a blanket.

The news of Challis's death happened to reach Melbourne during the 1916 football finals. For his many admirers in Victoria, it was particularly poignant timing. Many reflected that just a year earlier Challis's brilliant play had been crucial to Carlton's premiership, and, now, in the lead-up to the 1916 Grand Final, his team mates were wearing black armbands and the football public was mourning his death.

Carlton played in that 1916 Grand Final, but without Challis they lost to Fitzroy. This result underlines how extraordinary that final series was. The VFL had become a truncated and lacklustre version of the immensely popular competition that Challis had adorned. This affected Victorians and the home front in a big way. Because of the war, only four teams participated in the VFL in 1916. So they all ended up in the finals. Fitzroy won only two matches before the finals, so they were well behind in last place. How the same side then managed to overcome all its rivals to win three finals in a row—and the premiership—remains one of those inexplicable mysteries.

But there was no mystery about the effect of Challis's death on his parents and siblings, and on many others as well. His mother, Margaret

Challis, was rarely able to talk about her eldest son without tears for decades afterwards.

### Loss of Social Cohesion

The anguish of loss arose, then, in more than one way. There was the anguish felt by so many thousands of Victorians about lost loved ones in their own families, and the anguish felt by so many Victorians about notable losses outside their own families, such as George Challis and Clunes Mathison.

There was also another kind of anguish concerning perceptions of the nation. Australia's social development in the lead-up to 1914 had been impressive. The young nation was relatively progressive, forward-looking and advanced (and Henry Higgins had been a prominent contributor to this state of affairs). Many Victorians welcomed the advent of welfare measures and innovations in public policy that confirmed Australia's emergence as a relatively cohesive society based on egalitarianism and democratic mechanisms such as the secret ballot. The extent of the harmony and cohesion should not be over-emphasised—some employers who were not imbued with sweetness and light vigorously resisted these social advances, and there were bitterly contested industrial disputes during this period—so it is a *relative* measure. Still, national confidence and buoyant optimism were evident, as shown recently in the superb exhibition *Glorious Days: Australia 1913* at the National Museum in Canberra, and as reflected in the progressive measures that prompted some analysts to conclude that Australia was leading the world in such initiatives. In fact, Europeans who kept an eye on these things and cared about them crossed the globe to scrutinise what they saw as an advanced social laboratory taking shape in Australia.

Victorians who kept an eye on these things and cared about them were dismayed by what the war did to them. The divisiveness of the war years ruptured the relative social cohesion that had underpinned Australia's social progress. Admittedly, it is true of course that the focus of many Victorians was overwhelmingly on the micro, just getting by day-to-day while remaining anxious about family members in the trenches, and this was much more important to them than whatever interest or awareness they might have had of the macro, of declining Australian national cohesion. All the same, though, there were Victorians who became increasingly concerned about the macro, as the bitterness of the recruitment and conscription campaigns kept

escalating, sectarianism kept intensifying, and Billy Hughes kept ranting and raving in recklessly inflammatory boots-and-all fashion as he ran the nation 'in an atmosphere of almost perpetual crisis'.<sup>29</sup>

The war years constitute surely the most divisive period in our history since European settlement. For Victorians who welcomed their nation's progressive tendencies, to see these tendencies ruptured by the war was a shattering disaster. To those who felt this way, this was yet another anguishing loss.

### Conclusion

Over the coming years we are inevitably going to hear a lot of claims that the war 'made' Australia in a positive sense. We will no doubt hear that the 'baptism of fire' at Gallipoli, and Australia's substantial contribution in the grim and gruelling years that followed, created enduring national traditions that remain widely esteemed—endurance, resourcefulness, comradeship and so on.

It is true that these traditions were highlighted during the war, and were esteemed, and still are esteemed, and do connect back to what the AIF did in the Great War.

It is true, too, that there was a vacuum that Gallipoli was perfectly timed to fill. At the start of the war there was a discernible yearning among Australians for their newly federated nation to do something special on the international stage. A talented 20-year-old Victorian lieutenant, Alan Henderson, exemplified this attitude in a letter he wrote home as his troopship approached Gallipoli on 24 April 1915: 'It is going to be Australia's chance and she makes a tradition out of this that she will always look back on ... The importance of this alone seems stupendous to Australia while the effect of success on the war itself will be even greater'.<sup>30</sup>

It is also true that some who had previously seen themselves primarily as, say, Tasmanians or Queenslanders came to see themselves more as Australians because of the war. This applied particularly to soldiers but probably to a good many back home as well.

So, with these elements in play, it is possible to see why the claim is made that the war 'made' Australia in a positive sense. But the combined effect is swamped by the ghastly magnitude of the losses. The 60,000 dead, all the maimed as well, the loss of so many of our brightest and best, together with the damaging rupture of Australia's cohesion and

optimism—the losses overwhelm any sense that the war was a positive for us.

In fact, the war could be said to have made Australia in a negative sense more than a positive one. Bill Gammage has compellingly captured the war's aftermath in Australia: 'Dreams abandoned, lives without purpose, women without husbands, families without family life, one long funeral for a generation and more after 1918'.<sup>31</sup>

The experience of Alan Henderson's family in Melbourne could perhaps be seen as Australia's experience in microcosm. Alan Henderson died of wounds at the Gallipoli landing, his even more talented brother was killed a fortnight later, and their mother Jessie, an indefatigable and widely admired social welfare activist, had a nervous breakdown.<sup>32</sup>

Another brother, Kenneth Henderson, was teaching at Melbourne Grammar School in 1915. During a lesson he was handed a message that told him about his brothers' deaths at Gallipoli; he turned white and rushed out of the classroom in distress. We know this because one of the students in that classroom was Keith Hancock, and he referred to the incident in an autobiography he wrote decades later after he had become a renowned historian.<sup>33</sup>

Hancock also described the effect on his own family in Melbourne of his brother Jim becoming a casualty at Pozieres. The Hancocks were told that Jim was missing. According to Keith, his mother Elizabeth 'was close to losing her reason because of her continual fretting over Jim'. Shades of Mary Elliott. Keith Hancock 'felt the strain too', and 'for many years afterwards' had 'a horrible dream in which Jim came back to us mutilated and mad'. Years later Keith was told that Jim 'had been obliterated by a shell', like George Challis. Keith ended up concluding that if 'the authorities had felt able to report him killed instead of missing they would have acted more humanely, for the suspense prolonged and poisoned my mother's grief'.<sup>34</sup>

The emphasis on Australia being allegedly 'made' by the war has meant that alternative national traditions, worthwhile potential traditions, have been overlooked, as Marilyn Lake has been reiterating and lamenting in recent years. If we had made a priority of focusing on the tradition of Australia the progressive nation leading the world before 1914, might our history over the last century have unfolded differently?

Mary Mathison, Blanche Edwards, Margaret Challis, Elizabeth Hancock, Mary Bage, Jessie Henderson, Mary Elliott, George McCrae,

Henry Higgins, Newton Wanliss—ten bereaved parents. Yet Australia lost 60,000 dead! Moreover, besides the parents there were also, of course, all the bereaved wives, fiancées, girlfriends, sisters and children. There was a great deal of anguish in Australia, and much of it was in Victoria.

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## Women Waging War: The National Council of Women of Victoria 1914–1920

*Judith Smart*

### **Abstract:**

*Women's organisations in Victoria during the Great War were subject to serious tensions that opened into bitter divisions lasting well into the postwar period. This article will focus on some of the issues that divided member organisations within the National Council of Women of Victoria (NCWV), particularly the battles between feminist pacifists and imperial pro-war loyalists over questions of peace and free speech, recruitment and conscription, attitudes to Germans, and between middle-class and working-class housewives over means of reducing the cost of living. It argues that existing differences within council were accentuated by the leaders' patriotic priorities, undermining previously shared ideals about peace and wellbeing. These tensions within council gradually faded in the postwar years, partly because dissident organisations disbanded or chose not to affiliate, and partly because council leaders joined erstwhile opponents in a commitment to League of Nations ideals of peace and arbitration.*

When the Great War broke out, the National Council of Women of Victoria (NCWV) was the largest of the five councils existing in Australia with 52 affiliated organisations recorded in 1915. Its leaders estimated that it represented the views of well over 100,000 women.<sup>1</sup> As such, it is an important source of information about the articulated responses of Victorian women to the war, including the conflicts between some of the affiliated organisations and their spokeswomen. Its limitations lie in the fact that its leadership was dominated by politically conservative women and that Labor Party women were discouraged from affiliating. Nevertheless, it did include radical feminist organisations, pacifists and some female-dominated unions and, though these were a tiny minority in the war years, they did not refrain from making their views known in council circles, as is evident in the issues discussed in this article.

Founded in 1901–02, the Victorian council had grown quickly. The National Councils of Women (NCWs) were part of an international

movement, the brainchild of two American women activists, Susan B. Anthony and May Wright Sewall. In June 1887, Anthony had issued an international call to 'all women of light and learning, to all associations of women in trades, professions and reforms, as well as to those advocating political rights,'<sup>2</sup> to congregate together on 25 March 1888 at a conference hosted by the National Woman Suffrage Association in Washington DC. The occasion was to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the American women's Equal Rights Convention held at Seneca Falls in 1848. The ideal, to form an international women's movement that went beyond political rights and reflected all the interests of women engaged in public work, was summed up by Sewall as the 'Council Idea'. The gathering in 1888 saw the birth of the International Council of Women (ICW), and, over the following decade, councils were formed in other nations, including the Australian colony of New South Wales (1896). By 1911, all the Australian states had formed councils, though the South Australian one was in recess from 1907 until 1920. Because the council was conceived as an umbrella structure, existing women's groups of all kinds could gather under its canopy at national and international levels to discuss matters of common interest, to gather information, and to learn from each other in order to promote peace and general wellbeing.<sup>3</sup>

As historian Kate Gray has demonstrated, the pre-war council 'sustained an extraordinary degree of unity, considering the breadth of opinion which it encompassed'. This, she argues, was assisted by a system of standing committees for special subjects developed by the ICW, enabling members to focus on the specific areas that interested them and thus minimise conflict. By mid-1914, there were ten such ICW committees, most of which had Victorian counterparts. However, from 1911, when the very large and politically conservative Australian Women's National League (AWNL) affiliated, the breadth of opinion in NCWV was diluted. As the composition of the executive increasingly came to reflect the AWNL's dominance, the sense of common cause on some significant issues weakened within the council, and this was accentuated by the outbreak of the First World War.<sup>4</sup>

The NCWV could not escape the community tension that opened into bitter division in the first year of the conflict and lasted well into the postwar period. The particular issues that split the council overwhelmed, though they did not destroy, consensus and continuing action on less contentious matters such as child welfare, domestic science education,

consumption of alcohol, equal pay, the nationality rights of married women, and access of women to public office. Most of these concerns (alcohol consumption was the main exception) lost traction in the crisis atmosphere of war. The focus of this article is on four key issues that divided the council and vitiated many of their other activities. The issues are peace and free speech, recruitment and conscription, treatment of Germans, and the cost of living (economy and thrift).

### Peace and Free Speech

Peace was a key ideal. The origins of the international council movement coincided with those of the peace movement. At the 1899 ICW quinquennial meeting in London, all the councils agreed that 'the claims of World Peace ... transcend all other needs for the progress and happiness of mankind'. A resolution was passed to 'advance by every means in their power the movement towards International Arbitration.'<sup>5</sup> The Standing Committee for Peace and Arbitration was the first special committee established by ICW, and most affiliated national councils followed suit. In Victoria, Vida Goldstein proposed the formation of the Peace and Arbitration Committee in March 1904, and Jessie Strong, wife of the Reverend Charles Strong, who founded the Melbourne Peace Society in 1905, was appointed convenor. Working through the Peace Society, the Peace and Arbitration Committee followed ICW's policy of engaging in local peace congresses, forming study groups on alternatives to war, and promoting new school textbooks.<sup>6</sup> Among its educational activities, it arranged lectures for the NCWV such as those by local pacifist the Reverend Leyton Richards on Norman Angell's book about the futility of war, *The Great Illusion*, in June 1912.<sup>7</sup> It also hosted leading international peace activist and president of the World Peace Foundation, David Starr Jordan, who addressed the council on 'Womanhood and War' in March 1914.<sup>8</sup> Starr Jordan's view that 'A nation in arms could not remain a nation of democracy' prefigured many of the arguments in which members of the NCWV were embroiled only a year later.

Though the NCWV did not proclaim its support for war immediately, its actions indicate the direction in which the leadership would take it. Council's first meeting after the declaration of war heard the governor-general's wife, Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson, on the work of the Red Cross, and Dr J.W. Barrett on supporting what was 'from our point of view' a just war, by going about their daily work 'in order

to produce wealth, and keeping 'a stiff upper lip'.<sup>9</sup> His sister, Dr Edith Barrett, NCWV home secretary, now became the principal organiser and honorary secretary of the Red Cross in Victoria. Reports of Red Cross work and pleas for assistance thereafter featured prominently in council activities. But, perhaps even more telling in these early months was a curt response to the Peace Society's request for cooperation that 'it was not within the province of the Council'.<sup>10</sup> The following months included discussions of women's work in war and stressed 'honor due to members who had sent sons to the war'. However, in May 1915, intimations of a harder pro-war line became evident.

At the March council meeting, Jessie Strong announced the formation of the Sisterhood of International Peace (SIP). The Sisterhood was not a militant group and did not take a position directly against the war; rather, it saw its role as educative, aiming to study the causes of war, to inculcate principles of peace in children through the *School Paper*, to bring the 'humanising influence of women to bear on the abolition of war', and to substitute international arbitration for 'irrational methods of violence'. Noting that several of its members' own 'sons and brothers had volunteered for the war', it 'wished to gain the co-operation of as large a number as possible of patriotic women'.<sup>11</sup> Two months later, with these objects in mind, Strong suggested that NCWV should revive its Peace and Arbitration Standing Committee. She clearly believed this was the most appropriate response council could make to news of the Gallipoli casualties, and especially the deaths of sons of two leading members; she also supported the suggested honour roll for mothers. But the proposal to revive the committee was not welcomed by the executive. Nor was the suggestion of ICW president Lady Aberdeen that study circles on international questions be set up. Rather, executive members emphasised the fact that Lady Aberdeen had rejected an invitation to the international women's peace conference at the Hague. They also quoted the view of the French NCW that the time had not come to speak of peace, that 'actual events have proved to us that a one-sided pacifism would be useless', and that an armistice while France and Belgium remained occupied would be a betrayal of the principles of liberty. The executive thus recommended to council that the question of peace should not be taken up.<sup>12</sup> Though 'varying views' were expressed by delegates, the June meeting ratified the executive's decision.<sup>13</sup>

This was a clear rebuff to Strong, who was the longest-serving executive member and senior vice president. Her letter of resignation, read to the council meeting after its decision to eschew any discussion of peace, was not accepted, but further negotiations were stymied by the obduracy of an executive now dominated by members of the fervently pro-war AWNL. At the August council, Strong reaffirmed her resignation in a letter that reportedly stated her fundamental disagreements with some of the committee, and her 'growing dissatisfaction at the way the business of the Council was conducted ... and the underhand tactics in regard to standing committees'.<sup>14</sup> This 'growing dissatisfaction' could only have been confirmed by the actions of the executive and council during July and August towards the newly appointed delegate of the Women's Political Association (WPA).

In the context of the major recruitment campaign then dominating press and pulpit throughout Melbourne, the WPA's appointment of prominent anti-war activist and former militant suffragette, Adela Pankhurst, as its second delegate to NCWV has to be seen as provocative. Indeed, it may well have been a calculated response to the council's treatment of Mrs Strong.<sup>15</sup> It was certainly one that exploded the polite veneer of mutual respect and tolerance that had so far contained the opposing views of the AWNL and their feminist and pacifist critics in council deliberations. Pankhurst, in Australia since 1914, had taken a strong anti-war and anti-imperialist position from the outset. She published articles critical not only of Britain's and Australia's involvement, but also of French and Belgian atrocities in Africa, as counter-propaganda to the reports of German atrocities in Belgium. Her views, labelled 'pro-German',<sup>16</sup> were anathema to loyalist women. So too was her role as a co-founder with Goldstein of the Women's Peace Army, formed a week or so earlier to 'fight for the destruction of militarism with the same spirit of self-sacrifice as soldiers show on the battlefield'.<sup>17</sup> The *Argus* commented in a leader on 23 July: 'If a bomb had been dropped last evening among the members of the National Council of Women ... it could hardly have created greater consternation.' The report continued: 'Mrs John McInerny, who presided over the horrified meeting, rose to her feet and said with unusual emphasis, "I positively object to Miss Pankhurst"'. This was greeted with 'vehement applause' and a vow by executive members 'to see what power they had to refuse the appointment'.<sup>18</sup> While Edith Barrett recommended persuasion,

others spoke of constitutional change to allow council veto of nominees. Only the other WPA delegate, Mrs Lucy Paling (who was also president of the SIP), and the Lady Teachers' Association delegate, Clara Weekes, defended the right of any affiliated organisation to appoint a delegate of its own choosing, however repugnant to others. This was to set a pattern of council debate and decision-making dominated by authoritarianism, intolerance of dissent, and single-minded dedication to the war effort.

At a special meeting in August, a new by-law was proposed to make appointment of delegates subject to council approval. The new senior vice president, Margaratta McInerny, ruled the WPA delegate ineligible to speak on the pretext that affiliation fees had not been paid. Though the fees were late, they had in fact been paid and Sister Eva Hurst thought she should be heard in the interests of 'British fair play'.<sup>19</sup> Both Edith Barrett and Margaret Cuthbertson, a factory inspector and delegate from the Women's Public Service Association,<sup>20</sup> suggested it 'might be advisable' to recognise Mrs Paling's right to speak. She was allowed to do so, arguing that the proposed by-law violated the constitutions of both the NCWV and the ICW, but was denied the right to move an amendment. Cuthbertson, one of the original framers of the constitution, warned against a misuse of power that would 'alter the whole policy and constitution of the Council', rather than making for its 'easier working'. It was 'drifting to a dangerous solution of a simple thing', she cautioned. International secretary Alice Michaelis, however, insisted that 'societies had to be in sympathy with the aims of the Council', though she did not pursue the implications if these aims were to change, as was now clearly occurring under the strains of war. Caroline Earle, an executive member and also prominent in the AWNL, perhaps made the most telling point in support of a new by-law. Matters, she declared, had reached a stage where 'if the By-Law were not passed there would be no Council'—it would 'melt away'. The new by-law was passed 47 votes to 6, reflecting the war's effects on tolerance of difference among Melbourne's leading women and also the power differential within council.<sup>21</sup>

Three weeks later, the regular general meeting of council accepted Mrs Strong's resignation 'with regret' but refused Paling and Weekes' request for further investigation. WPA's nomination of Adela Pankhurst was also formally 'disapproved' 44 votes to 7. The seven dissentients promptly left the meeting before the address on 'Patriotism' by academic

and pro-war activist Archibald Strong. He stressed that, unlike Adela, Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst were now 'doing their best for the Empire' in London, 'rousing men to go to the war'.<sup>22</sup> The die was cast.

Open conflict reached a highpoint at the September council meeting when the WPA's reaffirmation of Pankhurst's appointment was referred back to the executive. Barrett declared that 'working for peace at the present time was little short of treasonable'. Uproar followed when Paling's notice of motion regarding the new by-law was ruled out of order and she was denied the right to speak. A constable was called, but the disturbance continued until the members of the WPA—including Vida Goldstein, who, like Strong, was an original council member—left the room, followed by 'the hoots and hisses' of the crowd. The gleeful *Argus* reporter depicted an angry Goldstein 'express[ing] her opinion of the National Council while cranking up her motor car in Flinders Lane', a story Goldstein rejected and one that probably employed dramatic licence to engender ridicule.<sup>23</sup> Pankhurst made one further attempt to take up her appointment as a delegate in October. A constable was called but she refused to leave unless charged. Both Pankhurst and Paling were denied permission to speak, and Pankhurst finally left, head held high, after the president refused to conduct any business while she was there.<sup>24</sup>

The council's attitude to peace and its determination to prosecute the war had hardened further with the news of the execution of British nurse Edith Cavell, Atta McInerny proclaiming:

She has sealed with her blood the divine right of man to revenge. Where is the pride of our Australian men, their chivalry, their respect for women, if they do not now come forward to take revenge? The business of women now is not to call for peace, not to protest against war, but to understand that nothing remains but a bloody contest.<sup>25</sup>

Reflecting the AWNL's view that council delegates should not have to associate with perpetrators of 'disloyal, undignified and disorderly conduct', the NCWV's annual general meeting in November confirmed and strengthened the changes to the by-laws and the constitution. These increased executive power over delegates and topics for consideration, and empowered the council to cancel the affiliation of any society.<sup>26</sup>

The marginalisation or expulsion of peace activists within their ranks liberated NCWV leaders from any pretence of political impartiality. An attempt by the Socialist Women's League (the women's

section of the Victorian Socialist Party) to affiliate was summarily rejected early in 1916 on the executive's recommendation. In response to Lucy Paling's request for an explanation, Atta McNerny embarked on what can only be described as a tirade—'Socialism would be all right if everybody had the same idea of work. Were socialism in force, not four out of six would work unless foodless and homeless'. She took exception too to the anti-religious message in the socialist/rationalist *Ross's Magazine*, concluding with some vehemence that if such 'blasphemous' ideas were 'the tenets of [the] Socialist Party the less the N.C.W. had to do with it the better'.<sup>27</sup> Although an application from the Hotel Caterers and Female Operatives union was accepted two months later, it was a close-run decision (24 to 18) made only after considerable discussion revealing much hostility to unionism within council. The WPA continued to be represented on council but its delegates, along with Clara Weekes, constituted a tiny minority and found their right to speak on matters of peace and militarism seriously curtailed.<sup>28</sup> The major such issue by the beginning of 1916 was conscription.

### Recruitment and Conscription

During the recruitment campaign in Melbourne in the winter of 1915, leading figures in the NCWV were moving towards advocacy of compulsion. Labour and anti-war spokesmen and women feared that the manpower census, legislated in July, presaged both industrial and military conscription. But NCWV leaders believed recording the nation's resources would contribute to a more efficient war effort. In the August meeting they requested additional census papers to be printed to include compulsory registration of women's work for national service. It was too late for this to be considered by the government, so council voted to support an existing voluntary register.<sup>29</sup> NCWV leaders did not themselves take to the recruitment platform. Indeed, very few women as yet addressed public gatherings except for Women's Peace Army campaigners, who incurred much vilification for doing so, especially from returned soldiers. Joy Damousi has attributed this to a perception that, in opposing war, recruitment and later conscription, they were attacking soldiers' masculinity.<sup>30</sup>

The taking of the manpower census in September encouraged the formation of the Universal Service League (USL), the leaders of which in Melbourne were barrister and public intellectual J.G. Latham<sup>31</sup> and liberal academics David Orme Masson, Dr J.H. MacFarland and Sir

Harry Allen. No women were invited to join its executive.<sup>32</sup> The league called for the efficient organisation of the population and hoped that the 'War Census Act, recently passed, will furnish the information necessary to enable this to be done'. Even if the voluntary system *could* produce enough men, they argued, 'its incidence is unjust and often harmful'.<sup>33</sup> While preserving its masculine leadership, the USL quickly realised the importance of attracting the support of women if it wanted to gain traction. Less than a fortnight after the league was formed, Masson addressed the NCWV, arguing to applause that 'Compulsory service would equalise responsibilities' and 'It was a matter in which the Empire came first'—only Lucy Paling voiced opposition.<sup>34</sup>

With its stance against the WPA and any discussion of peace affirmed by the death of Nurse Cavell in October, the council voted to hold a 'monster women's meeting' in the Melbourne Town Hall to encourage active participation in the ongoing recruitment campaign.<sup>35</sup> In announcing this in her column in the *Argus*, 'Vesta' (Stella Allan, who was an early NCWV activist) described movingly the losses many of the council's leaders and members had suffered and the sorrow, mourning and shared pride that drove their 'resoluteness and determination'. She believed that the council 'may claim to voice, as no other organisation can, the feeling of women of all creeds, parties and opinions on matters which lie beyond party and creed'. And she was convinced 'That the women of Victoria, unless I am a poor judge of what they think and feel, will vote gladly and solidly for conscription if it should become necessary'.<sup>36</sup>

The monster meeting, held on 18 January 1916 under the council's auspices, was packed out and the audience listened to impassioned addresses lauding women's sacrifices and appealing to them to make still more. The speakers included the minister for defence, the premier, the leader of the state Labor opposition and the chair of the State Recruiting Committee, but only one woman, the governor-general's wife, Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson. The resolution passed urged all women 'to use every effort, no matter at what personal cost, to secure final victory'.<sup>37</sup> Another NCWV-sponsored women's meeting in Hawthorn in early February passed the same resolution, but its significance lay in the audience's enthusiastic response to the advocacy of compulsion by the speaker, prominent federal Liberal politician W.A. Watt: 'It was time for the authorities to put our country in order and place us under military orders'.<sup>38</sup>

By April 1916, the council was prepared to support conscription openly, agreeing to send a resolution and two representatives to an Australian Natives Association pro-conscription meeting on 3 May. Against Paling's objection that this was a political question, advocates argued that it was, rather, a 'national' one.<sup>39</sup> Like conscriptionists in the AWNL, the USL and employer organisations, the NCWV was angered by the prime minister's decision in August to hold a referendum on compulsory military service rather than introducing it immediately. When council expressed its 'deep disappointment that he and his government have avoided their responsibility by referring the matter to a referendum', only Clara Weekes and Sara Lewis of the Hotel Caterers dissented. McInerny could not resist a personal jibe, reminding Weekes that the chair (Jessie Henderson) had lost two sons at Gallipoli. 'Have you?' she asked. Just five votes were recorded against the motion.<sup>40</sup>

Despite their disappointment at Hughes's decision, council spokeswomen nevertheless threw themselves into the referendum campaign with great enthusiasm. The following month, the newly formed National Referendum Council requested the assistance of the NCW in speaking to girls in large shops and factories. Sara Lewis, supported by Lucy Paling, claimed council delegates had no right to pledge the women they represented to conscription or to impugn the loyalty of opponents. However, Mrs McInerny silenced her, and council overwhelmingly agreed 'to express the determined resolve of the women of Victoria ... to put forward every effort to secure an affirmative vote at the referendum poll'. There were only three votes opposed. Council also agreed to organise a mass meeting of women at the prime minister's request.<sup>41</sup> When McInerny announced that the gathering would be held at the Auditorium on 16 October, it was significant that she chose the AWNL annual conference to do so.<sup>42</sup>

McInerny also called a special meeting of council for 3 October to plan 'referendum propaganda' and, in the following weeks, she spoke at a number of suburban conscription meetings for women, but not without interruption.<sup>43</sup> Because local authorities had denied access to municipal halls for anti-conscriptionist meetings, working-class men and women took action to prevent speakers at pro-conscription meetings in their suburbs being heard. Mrs McInerny was herself a recipient of the medicine she had meted out to anti-war members of the NCWV when, at a women-only meeting at the Fitzroy Town Hall

on 10 October, she was howled down in spite of a plea from Sara Lewis to 'give her a hearing'. And prominent NCWV figure Ivy Brookes was pelted with mud as she left a meeting of women factory workers on 27 October.<sup>44</sup> But in middle-class suburbs like Caulfield, council leaders were welcomed.<sup>45</sup> At the 2000-plus women-only meeting the NCWV had been asked to organise on 16 October, Mrs McInerny ordered the police to remove interjectors. In her own address, she proclaimed that: 'Every woman worthy of her womanhood would rather see her boy, her husband, or her sweetheart die a soldier's death than live a coward's life.'<sup>46</sup> Conscription now assumed priority over all other issues, the NCWV executive abandoning the October council meeting in favour of a women-only conscription gathering in the Assembly Hall on the eve of the vote.

Given the passion and energy NCW leaders had devoted to the conscription cause, their sense of betrayal was correspondingly profound when the nation rejected it. Though Victorians voted marginally in favour, the Melbourne metropolitan electorates were narrowly opposed.<sup>47</sup> In 1917, the council leadership effectively forsook its non-party political position, openly supporting Billy Hughes's National 'Win the War' Party in the May federal elections and arguing once again that this was a national rather than a political choice.<sup>48</sup> The war was all. At a special meeting called to discuss a 'Win the War Policy' in February, one speaker suggested a government-issued badge to differentiate 'men who had volunteered and slackers', and it was resolved that women and girls should refuse to play any kinds of sport with eligible men who had not volunteered. Attitudes continued to harden and, when the director general of recruiting eventually agreed to issue a badge to volunteers, council resolved that eligibility to wear it should be limited to those who had been rejected at least twice.<sup>49</sup>

When the second conscription referendum was announced in November, council once again mobilised for action, a special meeting passing a resolution of support after a rousing speech from McInerny calling members to do all that was possible to 'free the world from military domination' and 'Prussian despotism'. The lone speaker against the motion was Lucy Paling, and she failed to find a seconder for her counter proposal. The meeting then resolved to form itself into a committee to work for the referendum.<sup>50</sup> Council was also officially represented on the Reinforcements Referendum Council alongside the

AWNL, the People's Party and the National Federation—that is, all the major non-Labor political organisations.<sup>51</sup> And McInerny, representing council, spoke at the Awnl conscriptionist meeting alongside the prime minister.<sup>52</sup> NCWV leaders also spoke at the 'Great Union Jack Rally' for women on 17 December, where the prime minister's wife topped the bill.<sup>53</sup>

Following the defeat of conscription a second time, NCWV leaders protested their loyalism and conviction about the need for compulsion—including 'universal woman service'—with even greater vehemence. In a letter to the *Argus* in February 1918, Atta McInerny claimed that: 'In all other belligerent countries women are working in place of men who have enlisted to serve their country. Why not here?'<sup>54</sup> The following month, along with Awnl president Eva Hughes, she participated in a loyalist meeting at the Melbourne Town Hall demanding that the lord mayor act against the display of disloyal banners in the recent St Patrick's Day procession. Both women spoke in favour of a resolution calling on the prime minister to use the War Precautions Act against such display in the streets.<sup>55</sup> McInerny was accorded unanimous retrospective approval by council.<sup>56</sup> But most of its loyalist sentiment was now directed against Germans rather than Irish Catholics.

### Treatment of Germans

The execution of Nurse Cavell and the marginalisation or exclusion of anti-war and peace activists in the council also seem to have freed its leaders and a large majority of members from any compunction about attacking Germans in their midst and imposing limitations on their freedom. Pankhurst and her supporters were labelled not just 'disloyal' but also 'pro-German', and hence as condoning the fate of Edith Cavell and its implications for 'Australian wives, sister, sweethearts, and daughters if Germany should obtain world power.'<sup>57</sup> By May 1916, some were ready to extend their anti-German sentiments beyond council and to take a public stance against 'too many Germans [who] were doing well in our midst'—'farmers and shopkeepers and others holding comfortable berths' constituted 'an insult to our soldiers fighting at the front'. The government was urged to take action. Though one member demurred that this was a political issue, others again argued it was 'national'. Only Clara Weekes was courageous enough to suggest that, since most Germans had been welcomed as migrants and that 'many of them were honest citizens', to deprive them of property and livelihood

was 'confiscation'. For her trouble, she was heckled and called on to 'sit down' and, on reminding delegates of the importance of free speech in council discussions, was informed by the chair that she had strayed from the subject.<sup>58</sup>

The bitterness engendered by the defeat of the first conscription referendum stimulated a resurgent intolerance of 'disloyalism' and brought hostility to all things German to the surface. In April 1917, 'Vesta' reported in her column an appeal from the French Union for Women's Suffrage, including evidence they had of abduction of Belgian girls to serve as prostitutes for German soldiers. She urged women's organisations, including the NCW, to unite in protest 'against those atrocities.'<sup>59</sup> In the wake of passing their resolution of protest, and voting to urge ICW president Lady Aberdeen to take a stance against German treatment of women and girls in Belgium and France, NCWV also agreed to consider Mrs F. Spencer's motion against 'any association with German women's organisations after the war.'<sup>60</sup> When Atta McInerny, after consulting ICW rules, explained that 'while the Council greatly sympathised with Mrs Spencer they could not as a Council interfere in any way with the International relations of the International Council', Spencer and others protested angrily. The seconder of the motion claimed she 'would prefer to meet his satanic majesty on terms of friendship' than any Germans. Sara Lewis protested that German women were powerless ('tongue-tied') and that council should respect the Golden Rule that underpinned their movement. Amidst uproar, McInerny then adjourned the meeting to take advice from Emily Dobson, leader of the Australian delegation to the 1914 ICW conference and now an ICW vice president.<sup>61</sup> When the meeting resumed in early June, she reported Dobson's ruling that the motion could not be discussed but, undeterred, Mrs Spencer gave notice of another motion to 'express their approval of the Anti-German League as carried in Sydney'. Spencer followed that up a month later with a demand, which was carried, that all German schools in the state be closed immediately—their continuance was 'a scandal. They were centres of disloyalty.'<sup>62</sup> When this request was rejected by Victoria's director of education, the council requested an interview with the premier.<sup>63</sup>

By 1918, Spencer had been appointed international secretary for NCWV but her anti-German sentiments had not moderated and neither had those of the council. In November that year, just after the

Armistice, it was resolved to press for tariffs on German and Austrian manufactured goods, and the following April delegates unanimously 'promised to buy no enemy goods'.<sup>64</sup> Then, on Spencer's proposal, the council resolved in July 1919, less than a month after the peace treaty had been signed in Versailles, to support a Canadian resolution that, as 'the German nation has repeatedly broken the golden rule, which is the standard of the National Council of Women':

That it be resolved that this National Council of Victoria request the president of the International Council, now that peace is signed, to call a meeting of the allied and neutral countries only, since the National Council of Women of Victoria is unwilling to be associated with the women of the national councils of Germany and her allies.<sup>65</sup>

The meeting also agreed to put the matter on the agenda for the interstate conference scheduled in October. But Queensland's Annie Carvosso took counsel from Lady Aberdeen 'that no matter of controversy between nations' could be raised and the Queensland and NSW councils together determined that it 'be not discussed'.<sup>66</sup> Yet, even as late as March 1920, as preparations were underway for the first postwar ICW congress in Norway, the Victorian council told Emily Dobson that they would only support representation by allied and neutral nations.<sup>67</sup>

### **Economy and Thrift**

The failure of the first conscription referendum and the declining recruitment levels had also convinced NCWV leaders that there needed to be a broader community commitment to sacrifice. Among women, they believed this should take the form of economy so more of the community's economic resources could be siphoned into war savings loans. But there was a new punitive quality to the thrift campaign on which the council embarked. It was directed not at the imported goods the wealthy were still able to buy but at what the dominant group in the NCWV saw as the inefficiency and ignorance of working-class women and their lack of commitment to the war effort. It is more than likely they believed this had contributed to the failure of the conscription referendum.

Before the war, some members of the NCWV had begun to take an interest in cost-of-living issues and the difficulties many working-class women had in making ends meet for a family on an unskilled worker's wage. Among the suggestions was a self-help scheme, an organisation to

'serve the interests of the woman in the home, especially the woman of limited means'.<sup>68</sup> When the value of the pound declined 22.68 per cent in Melbourne in the first year of the war, the time seemed opportune.<sup>69</sup> Between May 1914 and July 1915, meat doubled in price, bread rose 50 per cent and butter 62.5 per cent.<sup>70</sup> The failure of the state government to impose effective price control stimulated the Liberal Party's Ivy Brookes to call for united action among women on the cost-of-living.<sup>71</sup>

Between May and July 1915, with the blessing of NCWV, Brookes organised a Housewives Co-operative Association 'to encourage co-operative buying and marketing of produce direct from the producer to the consumer'.<sup>72</sup> The following months saw the establishment of bureaus in the 'thickly populated', 'democratic' suburbs where there were no local markets—so that producers could deliver foodstuffs directly to members at reasonable prices. Women must 'work together loyally and harmoniously ... like an army', proclaimed the editor of the *Housewife*.<sup>73</sup> But working-class women did not give the organisation the grassroots support it needed or rally to this call for consensus. This may be partly attributable to lack of cash to buy in bulk from the depots. However, it also reflects growing class antagonism and suspicion of the leaders' motives in light of their involvement in the recruitment campaign, their growing support for conscription, and their crusade against the planned referendum to increase Commonwealth powers over prices and monopolies. Raw class-based political conflict thus overwhelmed the tentative steps taken by middle-class women towards a gendered politics of consumption. Lucy Paling, for example, resigned from the association's executive as early as 22 July 1915.<sup>74</sup> By the end of 1916, a much-diminished Housewives Association had eschewed cooperative trading and converted itself into a propagandist group preaching the conservative panacea of thrift as patriotic sacrifice.

The NCWV itself took up the cause of thrift at the beginning of 1917, arguing that 'as economy was essential to winning the war so women must make further sacrifices in pleasure and comforts & in every detail of life'. They agreed to cooperate in a 'women's thrift campaign' to 'eliminate waste and promote efficiency' inaugurated by the League of Honour for Women and Girls.<sup>75</sup> Launched at a public meeting on 19 March, the campaign promoted a triad of conservative economic shibboleths: increased production, reduced expenditure and investment in war loans. At the end of May, a Thrift Campaign Council, comprising

representatives of the 52 affiliates of the NCWV, was established to run Thrift Week in June. The program included 'cookery demonstrations, lectures, public meetings and the distribution of "thrift" literature'; lecture topics covered 'food values, economical buying, ethics of thrift and "unconsidered trifles"'.<sup>76</sup> 'Vesta', in her *Argus* column, was quickly on board, criticising 'the money now spent on luxuries, in both food and clothing'.<sup>77</sup> Mostly this was an adjunct to the federal government's propaganda exercise aimed at encouraging people to put money into war loans. But it also coalesced with a punitive campaign of government cutbacks waged by Victoria's Economy Party, which held the balance of power in state parliament from December



Macaroni was the thrifty substitute for meat



One of the thrifty and palatable (?) recipes for macaroni, Book of Recipes, 1917. Courtesy of the State Library of Victoria.

1915 and was to lead a new government after the state elections in November 1917. The NCWV women's campaign was mostly directed to ordinary housewives rather than the purchasers of imported cars, furs and silks the federal authorities were targeting. As leading MHR and conscriptionist Sir William Irvine told a council meeting, '[every little act of self-denial] was important and he appealed to those present to 'use their influence in encouraging domestic thrift'.<sup>78</sup> The League of Honour even published a recipe book 'for the Empire' to celebrate Thrift Week with the rather inelegant slogan 'A Small Leak will Sink a Great Ship'. Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson wrote a foreword endorsing the campaign to avoid waste by voluntary sacrifices. The small amounts saved by strategies such as the substitution of macaroni for meat would all add to the treasury and to 'the staying power of the Empire'.<sup>79</sup>

Labour movement organisations, including women's groups, were outraged. Since the start of the war, retail prices of food and groceries in Melbourne had risen 28.2 per cent and wages had not kept pace. In the changed political circumstances, the labour movement launch its own campaign about the cost of living. In defiance of the calls of middle-class women to tighten belts, labour activists urged vigorous protest. 'Thrift' was a ploy of capitalism, claimed one labour paper.<sup>80</sup> 'Winning the war did not mean starving the people', as Political Labor Council president Chris Bennett put it. But labour leaders soon lost control of the cost of living campaign to more radical elements, and especially the vast numbers of ordinary women who regularly occupied the streets in the following months.

Beginning on 15 August, Adela Pankhurst, now a Victorian Socialist Party activist, led growing numbers of women in demonstrations and marches on federal parliament demanding release of food in storage as well as punishment of exploiters and threatening direct action to forcibly take the 'people's food'. The protests, which included considerable violence and property damage, continued into late September, and were finally put down after the prohibition of meetings, the invocation of the Riot Act, the repeated arrest of the ringleaders, and the enrolment of over four hundred special constables.<sup>81</sup>

## Conclusion

It is hard to see how the National Council of Women could recover that 'extraordinary degree of unity' and accommodate 'the breadth of opinion' that had been the hallmark of its pre-war years. Yet, it lost few

of its affiliates during the war, and the chief internal source of opposition to the leadership's increasingly rabid loyalism, the Women's Political Association, disbanded in 1919 after Vida Goldstein left Australia for the women's peace conference in Zürich. A new, more moderate, feminist group, the Victorian Women Citizens' Movement, affiliated in 1922, and a revived Housewives' Association supporting modified co-operativism, as well as targeted boycotts, soon rivalled the dominance of the AWNL in council's leadership. Five years after the war, the number of member organisations had risen to 67 and the political antagonisms of the war years had dissipated, in part because the more radical organisations had disbanded or did not seek affiliation.<sup>82</sup> Labor Party women remained unaffiliated and emerging radical women's organisations such as those within the new Communist Party chose to remain separate.

The council's attitude to cooperation with German women and to peace advocacy did gradually change. The decline in prejudice and xenophobia was slow but unmistakable. It can be attributed principally to the success of ICW president Lady Aberdeen in bringing German women back into the International Council fold; the formation and growth of the League of Nations; the close links with the League established by the ICW; and Australia's pride in its status as a founding member and champion of the League. League of Nations Unions (LNU) were formed between 1920 and 1922 in most Australian states, and NCWV's president was appointed a vice-president in the Victorian branch in April 1921.<sup>83</sup> In 1924, the Australian councils also began to show interest in a wider peace activism, largely in response to Lady Aberdeen's call for them to hold a Prevention of Causes of War conference at the same time and along similar lines to the one she was convening at Wembley in England in the first week in May.<sup>84</sup> NCWV arranged a conference for 8 May at which well-known speakers addressed the large audience on the subjects set down for Wembley, including democratic control of foreign affairs, universal reduction of armaments and ultimate disarmament, and reference of all disputes to arbitration.<sup>85</sup>

Overall, NCWV benefitted from the expansion and diversification of the women's movement in the postwar decade, a product in part of increased confidence derived from war work and activism. But legacies of wartime internal conflict took time to abate and some never healed. Though it largely supported the mainstream feminist equality agenda,

following ICW policies, the Victorian council retained a wary attitude towards the more explicit feminism represented by the new Australian Federation of Women Voters, as well as keeping its distance from the successor to the Sisterhood of International Peace, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and from most trade union, Labor and Communist Party women's organisations.

#### NOTES:

- 1 NCWV Council Minutes, 25 May 1916. The number given here, 106,000, was based on returns by only 17 of the affiliated societies.
- 2 Leila Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1997, p. 15.
- 3 Leen Van Molle and Eliane Gubin (eds), *Women Changing the World: A History of the International Council of Women*, Brussels, Editions Racine, 2005, p. 16.
- 4 Kate Gray, 'The Acceptable Face of Feminism: The National Council of Women of Victoria, 1902–18', MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1988, pp. 94, 96, 99–104. On the committees, see Rupp, p. 22; Gubin and Van Molle (eds), pp. 95–102, and NCWV annual reports, as well as ICW quinquennial reports for 1899, 1909 and 1914. See NCWV annual report 1911 on the AWNL's affiliation.
- 5 [http://www.ncwcanada.com/ncwc2/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/ICW-CIF\\_Resolutions1.pdf](http://www.ncwcanada.com/ncwc2/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/ICW-CIF_Resolutions1.pdf)
- 6 Catherine Jacques and Sylvie Lefebvre, 'From Pacifism to Humanitarian Action', in Gubin and Van Molle (eds), chap. VII, pp. 171–94; also [http://www.ncwcanada.com/ncwc2/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/ICW-CIF\\_Resolutions1.pdf](http://www.ncwcanada.com/ncwc2/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/ICW-CIF_Resolutions1.pdf). The Victorian committee failed to supply annual reports.
- 7 NCWV Council Minutes, 27 June 1912, NCWV Records, State Library of Victoria (SLV), in transition. Richards, an Englishman later involved in Britain's wartime peace movement, was minister at the Collins Street Independent Church 1911–13.
- 8 *Argus*, 21 March 1914, p. 21.
- 9 *Argus*, 28 August 1914, p. 9; NCWV Council Minutes, 27 August 1914.
- 10 NCWV Council Minutes, 25 September 1914.
- 11 *Weekly Times*, 3 July 1915, p. 10; 28 August 1915, p. 13.
- 12 *Weekly Times*, 3 July 1915, p. 10; NCWV Council Minutes, 27 May and 24 June 1915.
- 13 NCWV Council Minutes, 24 June 1915.
- 14 *Argus*, 27 August 1915, p. 9.
- 15 See Gray's discussion of this point, pp. 114–17.
- 16 See column 'Social Circle' in *Leader*, 31 July 1915, p. 49.
- 17 *Woman Voter*, 15 July 1915.
- 18 *Argus*, 23 July 1915, p. 6; NCWV Council Minutes, 22 July 1915.
- 19 NCWV Council Minutes, 5 August 1915; *Argus*, 18 March 1915, p. 6.

- 20 Anthea Hyslop, 'Cuthbertson, Margaret Gardiner (1864–1944)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cuthbertson-margaret-gardiner-5858/text9961>.
- 21 NCWV Council Minutes, 5 August 1915. Before 1919, the official president of NCWV was the governor's wife but the senior vice president in fact performed the major presidential duties.
- 22 NCWV Council Minutes, 26 August 1915; *Argus*, 27 August 1915, p. 9. Strong was no relation to Charles and Jessie Strong. See V.A. Edgeloe, 'Strong, Sir Archibald Thomas (1876–1930)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/strong-sir-archibald-thomas-8701/text15227>.
- 23 NCWV Council Minutes, 23 September 1915; *Argus*, 24 September 1915, p. 6; Janette M. Bomford, *That Dangerous and Persuasive Woman: Vida Goldstein*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1993, p. 155.
- 24 *Argus*, 29 October 1915, p. 6.
- 25 *Argus*, 23 October 1915, p. 19.
- 26 *Woman*, VIII, 8, 1 October. 1915, p. 507; see also letter from Eva Hughes (President of the AWNL) and Daisy Matthews (AWNL delegate to the NCW) to the NCW executive, 5 October 1915, conveying the AWNL resolution on the subject. NCWV Executive Minutes, October 1915; *Australasian*, 4 December 1915, p. 45.
- 27 NCWV Council Minutes, 25 February 1916; *Argus*, 25 February 1916, p. 6.
- 28 NCWV Minutes, 27 April 1916; *Argus*, 28 April 1916, p. 8.
- 29 *Argus*, 17 July 1915, p. 19; NCWV Council Minutes, 26 August 1915.
- 30 Joy Damousi, 'Socialist Women and Gendered Space: Anti-conscription and Anti-war Campaigns 1914–18', *Labour History*, no. 60, May 1991, pp. 1–15.
- 31 Latham, a lawyer by profession, was a rationalist, an opponent of scripture teaching in state schools and a member of the Deakinite Liberal Party. He was the secretary of the USL in Victoria. See Stuart Macintyre, 'Latham, Sir John Grieg', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 10, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1986, pp. 2–6.
- 32 Other members of the executive committee were Alfred Deakin, Professor Harrison Moore (Law), Professor T.H. Laby (Natural Philosophy), Dr Alexander Leeper (Warden of Trinity College and an outspoken imperialist and conservative), J.E. Mackey (MLA, Gippsland West), Dr Alan Newton, Messrs John Grice, John Sanderson, W.H. Needham, Archibald T. Strong, A.J. Day, C.A. Hack, K. Henderson, F.W. Eggleston, A.T. King, G. Atkins. See *Argus*, 22 September 1915. The Victorian branch was formed at a meeting at the Melbourne town hall on 11 September. Latham Papers, MS 1009/17/7, National Library of Australia (NLA).
- 33 USL Manifesto, *Age*, 11 September 1915, in Latham Papers, MS 1009/17/1.
- 34 *Argus*, 24 September 1915, p. 6.
- 35 *Argus*, 22 December 1915, p. 12.
- 36 'Women to Women', *Argus*, 22 December 1915, p. 12.
- 37 *Argus*, 19 January 1916, p. 9.
- 38 *Argus*, 9 February 1916, p. 9.
- 39 *Argus*, 28 April 1916, p. 8; NCWV Council Minutes, 27 April 1916. The ANA had been moving steadily towards support for conscription since mid-1915 and resolved in favour at its state conference in March 1916. Its women's branch, the Australian Women's Association, was represented on council by Mrs Fossett.
- 40 NCWV Council minutes, 31 August 1916.
- 41 *Argus*, 29 September 1916, p. 7.
- 42 *Argus*, 30 September 1916, p. 20.
- 43 *Argus*, 3 October 1916, p. 1.
- 44 See more detailed account of such meetings in Judith Smart, 'The Right to Speak and the Right to Be Heard: The Popular Disruption of Conscription Meetings in Melbourne 1916', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 23, no. 92, April 1989, pp. 203–19.
- 45 *Argus*, 14 October 1916, pp. 17, 18.
- 46 *Argus*, 17 October 1916, p. 7. Hughes had in fact spoken instead to the AWNL on 2 October.
- 47 Smart, note 68.
- 48 *Argus*, 2 May 1917, p. 10.
- 49 NCWV Council minutes, 15 February 1917; 7 June 1917.
- 50 NCWV Council minutes, 23 November 1917; *Argus*, 24 November 1917, p. 19.
- 51 *Argus*, 20 November 1917, p. 7. NCWV representatives were Margaratta McInerny, Cecilia Downing and Delia Russell.
- 52 *Argus*, 13 December 1917, p. 7.
- 53 *Argus*, 18 December 1917, pp. 7, 8.
- 54 *Argus*, 21 February 1918, p. 9.
- 55 *Argus*, 22 March 1918, p. 8.
- 56 NCWV Council minutes, 22 March 1918.
- 57 *Argus*, 23 October 1915, p. 19.
- 58 NCWV Council minutes, 25 May 1916; *Argus*, 26 May 1916, p. 9.
- 59 *Argus*, 25 April 1917, p. 12.
- 60 NCWV Council Minutes, 26 April 1917.
- 61 NCWV Council Minutes, 31 May 1917.
- 62 NCWV Council Minutes, 7 and 28 June, 26 July 1917; *Argus*, 27 July 1917, p. 8.
- 63 NCWV Council Minutes, 23 August 1917.
- 64 NCWV Council Minutes, 20 November 1918, 24 April 1919.
- 65 NCWV Council Minutes, 24 July 1919.
- 66 NCWQ Executive Minutes, 29 September 1919, Minute Book No. 5 1916–19, 7266, NCWQ Minute Books, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland.
- 67 NCWV Council Minutes, 26 March 1920.

- 68 May Maxwell, 'History of the Housewives' Association', *Housewife* (Victoria), June 1937, p. 26.
- 69 See tables, 'Purchasing Power of Money (Food, Groceries and Home Rent)—Amount Necessary on the Average in Each Year from 1901 to 1914 (1915) to Purchase in Each Capital Town What Would have Cost on the Average £1 in 1911 in the Australian Capital Cities Regarded as a Whole', *Official Yearbook for the Commonwealth of Australia*, No. 8, 1915, p. 1048; No. 9, 1916, p. 1102.
- 70 Ernest Scott, *Australia During the War*, vol. XI of *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–18*, ed. C. E. W. Bean, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1938, p. 633; Marnie Haig-Muir, 'The Economy at War', in Joan Beaumont (ed.), *Australia's War 1914–18*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1995, p. 109.
- 71 'Housewives Co-operative Association', Brookes Papers, MS1924/38/9–14, and 'A Brief Chronology', Brookes Papers, MS 1924/38/52–67, NLA.
- 72 *Housewife* (Victoria), 1 September 1915, pp. 2–3.
- 73 'Housewives Co-operative Association', Brookes Papers, MS 1924/38/9–14, NLA.
- 74 Housewives' Association of Victoria Ltd Minutes of Executive 1915–16, MS PA 92/7, Box 4, SLV.
- 75 NCWV Council minutes, 15 February 1917, 22 February 1917; *Argus*, 27 March 1917, p. 8.
- 76 *Argus*, 31 May 1917, p. 9.
- 77 *Argus*, 21 February 1917, pp. 12, 13.
- 78 *Argus*, 28 September 1917, p. 6.
- 79 Economic Pamphlets, LaTrobe Collection, SLV.
- 80 Judith Smart, 'Feminists, Food and the Fair Price: The Cost of Living Demonstrations in Melbourne, August–September, 1917' *Labour History*, no. 50, May 1986, pp. 113–31.
- 81 Smart, 'Feminists, Food and the Fair Price'.
- 82 See NCWV, *Report for 1923*, pp. 19–21.
- 83 Minute Book 1921–27, League of Nations Union, Victorian Branch, 23 March and 12 April 1921, in League of Nations Union (Victoria) Papers, MS2198, NLA.
- 84 *Argus*, 1 April 1924.
- 85 NCWV Council minutes, 8 May 1924.

## 'Doing All that is Possible': Women State School Teachers, Girls and Preferred Contributions to Victoria's War Effort, 1914–1918

*Rosalie Triolo*

### Abstract

*During the Great War, 'every facility' was granted in clear terms to the male teachers and senior boys of Victoria's Education Department to vacate their classrooms for recruitment depots. Yet, female teachers and school girls had to negotiate a complex mix of requests and silences to determine what was possible and preferred. This article explores the enduring and changing priorities for women and girls that constituted what was possible, when, and why. It argues that both traditional gender roles and departmental war pragmatism confined the service of women and girls at that time.*

Ewen Francis Maclean was a teacher at Tabilk state school prior to enlisting in the Australian Imperial Force.<sup>1</sup> On receiving socks early in his war service, he wrote to thank 'Janet' and 'Agnes', the two school girls who had knitted them. His message found its way to Victoria's Education Department and was almost certainly published by the departmental leadership in August 1915. It neatly summarised several departmental viewpoints held early in the war, including ones that would span the war's duration. In a system where pupils as well as teachers were expected to read and heed all contents of the *School Paper*, and where many other members of the wider community could read the same or receive it through their children, Maclean's words had significant moment.<sup>2</sup> He wrote:

Today, just as we are going to the Dardanelles, our new socks have been issued. When I got mine, I found your note attached, and I want to thank you very sincerely. Of course, being girls, you cannot go to war; but, in making such nice things for us, you are doing all that is possible for you, and that is all we who are at the front can hope to do. Most of the men found notes on their socks, and we are all proud of the girls who are working so hard for their country. I am more proud because I am a Gippslander myself, and was a teacher before I volunteered.<sup>3</sup>

The departmental leadership consisted of a formidable pair of men committed profoundly to their Empire, nation, Victorian state schooling system and the war effort; the Director Frank Tate and his editor of all departmental publications, Charles Long.<sup>4</sup> Their views were evident in the Department's voices, the *School Paper* and the *Education Gazette*, on which this article will focus. Conveniently for the Department and Executive, Maclean summarised in five ways their personal, as well as wider, departmental expectations, of girls and women during the war.

First, the girls were enacting 'self-denial' in 'making a comfort' for a soldier. This generosity of thought and deed on the home front was expected of all pupils, as well as teachers and any readers of departmental publications, whether females, or those males ineligible to enlist. Appropriate activities of service and self-denial were promoted vigorously by the Department through its patriotic fund and the *School Paper*. Readers learned through their October 1914 edition the significance of being at war and what the important activity of 'self-denial' entailed:

[E]very child should put in his mite, be it never so small a coin, for every little helps. In most schools this is already being done. The girls are also joining sewing clubs, to make warm underclothing and other comforts for who are going to the war. Classes in first aid and nursing are being formed.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to countless suggestions for patriotic home front activities of denial, special 'Thrift' numbers of the *School Paper* for Grade V-VIII readers developed the theme in July 1917 and 1918.<sup>6</sup>

Second, even though many young boys would be expected to knit in the early stages of the war, Agnes and Janet had performed a traditionally gendered expectation by knitting socks—a distinction also important to Tate, Long and their Department. Third, the Department was able to enhance the act of self-denial by emphasising that the beneficiary of the girls' activity was 'one of their own', a teacher. Fourth, Maclean's phrases 'doing all that is possible for you' when 'you cannot go to war' reminded the Department's girls that they could not possibly enlist for active service on the battle front, but could avowedly 'do their bit' at home. But a fifth and more discrete expectation of the Department may be considered in Maclean's phrase that women 'cannot go to war'. The distinction that girls were unable to 'go' is important



'Florence Nightingale attending the wounded in the hospital at Scutari in the north-west of Turkey-in-Asia, during the Crimean War (1854-56)', in 'Florence Nightingale', *School Paper*, VII-VIII, May 1912, p. 60

because much evidence suggests that the Department's male teachers, trainees and senior pupils of eligible age were, from the declaration of war to conclusion, given 'every facility' to depart Australia's shores.<sup>7</sup> This distinction gained prominence as the war progressed and as the Department either promoted selected activities for girls and women, or remained completely silent on others. While encouraging girls and women to do all they could on the home front, the Department would become nearly silent in encouraging older girl pupils and women teachers to 'go to war's battle front' as nurses or members of Voluntary Aid Detachments. This article explores why and argues that both departmental custom and pragmatism hedged the lives of women and girls.

During the war, references to men and boys in the *School Paper* and the *Education Gazette*, and especially to eligible men's capacities to serve on the battle front, far outweighed those about girls and women generally, and even the work of nurses and Voluntary Aid Detachments.

This minimalism had been noted a decade prior. The Victorian Lady Teachers' Association had written to the Department complaining that 'women teachers and girls apparently have no existence ... [T]he only persons mentioned are men and boys ... [T]hree-fifths of the teachers are women and half the pupils of our schools are girls, our existence should be acknowledged'.<sup>8</sup> Yet, there was no revision of departmental reporting across that decade; and, following the outbreak of war, the references to males and their activities only increased, taking even more of the page-space from girls and women.

However, girls gained equal billing in the first 'self-denial statement' to be published for Grade VII-VIII *School Paper* readers after the war's declaration. The author was William Gillies, a textbook writer whose writings Charles Long and the Department often published:

This is the time when our boys would like to be men, and our girls to be women—the boys to fight and the girls to nurse ... There is not a boy or girl in Australia who cannot help in some way. Some will do extra work at home while father or brother is absent with the troops; others will deny themselves pleasures to give their pence to a patriotic fund; some girls will learn first aid and nursing, and others will help to make clothing for the soldiers.

Yet, notably, Gillies qualified the girls' opportunity to nurse by adding that a girl could more likely be 'a capable home-maker. Without good homes, no nation can be strong; and girls can help quite as much as the boys'.<sup>9</sup>

Gillies' qualification about the more important role of girls in the home was widely supported by the Department. The exhortation of the British general, Horace Smith-Dorrien, to his wife was published in the *School Paper*: 'Tell the women and girls they can serve their country best by leading quiet lives, thus setting an example of self-restraint and uprightness at home'.<sup>10</sup> Britain's Earl Roberts was quoted for telling British girls to deny themselves 'pleasures' during the war and urging their mothers 'to help your men-folk, your sons and your brothers, in their struggles against temptations'.<sup>11</sup> Resisting the usual temptations and emotions also meant denying oneself public expressions of grief. All Britons, but women, specifically, who could hide their emotions were as brave and admirable as their service-men: 'The mother ... [with no one but her secret God / To know the pain that weighs upon her / Sheds holy blood as o'er the sod / Received on freedom's field of honor'.<sup>12</sup>

In May 1916, nine months after teacher-soldier Maclean's statement, a note by another soldier, 'F.D.R.', to 'Alice', was published:

Do people think that school-girls are useless in this great war because they are unable to help their country? They are quite wrong if they do. It is such good deeds as you do in making clothes to keep us warm, and such good thoughts as you think when you write those loving wishes which we find enclosed with your gifts, that nerve our hearts for the battle. So you help, and some are cheered and encouraged.<sup>13</sup>

The war intensified the Department's traditional expectations of what constituted girls' good character, self-denial and traditionally gendered values, attitudes and behaviours. Its exhortations reinforced women and girls' desires to support servicemen from their families, or those known to them as members of school or wider communities. The female response on the home front was enormous. The nature and extent of practical patriotism by pupils and teachers, especially female, in raising funds, making comforts, donating food to local hospitals, visiting such hospitals and writing letters to men on active service has been recorded and surveyed extensively by both the Department and subsequent historians.<sup>14</sup>

Certainly the Department had the 'machinery' of a centralised, regulated bureaucracy to manage, publicise and motivate patriotic activities—and 'punish' those not doing as expected, as teachers had been reminded in 1910.<sup>15</sup> Yet, the possibility of punishment seems to have had little to do with the prodigious output. Less acknowledged over the decades has been the unprecedented departmental licence for initiative, creativity and autonomy granted to girls and women on the home front to step beyond the bounds of their school, its syllabus, its usual hours—beyond their homes; but not beyond their gender roles.

Fund-raising encouraged by the Department through the sale of buttons, badges, ribbons and postcards immediately opened the door to girls to sell such items in the wider community.<sup>16</sup> Girls participated regularly in concerts, dances and socials.<sup>17</sup> They contributed products and staffed community 'bazaars', 'fetes', 'jumble fairs' and 'sales', or ran 'stalls' in their streets or back yards.<sup>18</sup> They scoured their local communities for kerosene tins to pack with stewed fruits to be sent overseas and for metal and glass for recycling.<sup>19</sup> They grew vegetables, fruits or flowers in spare lots in urban areas, or created more expansive

gardens in rural areas.<sup>20</sup> They raised chooks and collected eggs.<sup>21</sup> And in February 1916, they and their teachers were advised of the fund-raising as well as learning opportunities of a November Flower Day.<sup>22</sup> Schools were to set up street stalls and sell bouquets and buttonholes, and head teachers were offered training at a floral art class: '[S]end as many of your lady teachers as you can spare without closing the school.'<sup>23</sup> Similar Flower Day arrangements were adopted in 1917 and 1918.<sup>24</sup>

There was one unusual and striking 'Win-the-War Procession' of military-like columns of girls marching from the horizon into Swanston Street, made all the more unusual for its inclusion in the *School Paper* for Grade III-IV readers.<sup>25</sup> But the department's archival sources do not explain why this image was chosen, especially as it features girls looking and acting like boys. Krowera state school girl, Winifred Grassick, who engaged in almost all of the traditionally gendered tasks, recorded that most of the above school related activities during the Great War had enabled her 'closest participation in Gippsland community life'.<sup>26</sup>

Considering the expansive coverage of military and naval men and their actions at the battlefronts, readers of the *School Paper* and the *Education Gazette* may have expected more on the work of nurses, even as models of the motherly and nurturing qualities that younger girls on the home front should demonstrate, and all the more for Gillies' early reference.<sup>27</sup> Nurses were referred to briefly and generously in one *School Paper* article mid-war as 'sweet-natured big-hearted sisters who never fail, no matter how long the day; how longer yet the night', but the focus of the article over two and a half pages was on the morale and condition of British soldiers.<sup>28</sup> One item explained, 'Nor must we forget the splendid women who have done such magnificent work in nursing the wounded'.<sup>29</sup>

Yet, the Department largely did forget. Nurses were scarcely mentioned for the war's duration.<sup>30</sup> For reasons unknown, a third early aim of the Victorian Education Department's Patriotic League, 'to organize and carry out classes of instruction for teachers and senior pupils in first aid and nursing', was never fully developed.<sup>31</sup> Initially supported well by the St. John Ambulance Association and having an enrolment by October 1914 of seven hundred teachers, all references to this aim soon disappeared. Presumably there was limited local need for such expertise compared with the increasing need for comforts overseas and in local hospitals. The Executive recorded an objection regarding

too much theory and insufficient 'practical work' but, even then, senior girls and women with or without any training were not encouraged to work in Victoria's hospitals.<sup>32</sup>

To what extent, then, did the Department believe girls may wish to nurse and to what extent did it cater to the war's requirement for nurses, which increased as the war progressed? Before the war, Florence Nightingale had appeared several times in the *School Paper* as an inspiring role model of womanhood. She was first introduced in 1898 as having perfected her nursing skills by kindly saving an injured dog otherwise to be put down.<sup>33</sup> In 1899, readers learned that she had demonstrated in the Crimean War (1854-55) 'a bravery and endurance that has never been surpassed in the annals of war'.<sup>34</sup> The third and fourth accounts of her war service a decade later in 1910, again with an illustration of her standing serenely in a crowded but neat hospital ward, described Nightingale instituting 'an entire change to the way the wounded were treated'. The accounts inquired of readers:

Can you not imagine the relief that came over our poor soldiers when they found themselves tended on smooth and comfortable beds, by gentle women, and felt tender hands which shrank from causing the smallest pain, lovingly fastening the bandages about their throbbing wounds? ... The soldiers, looking through the darkness at the figure moving among them like an angel, called her "The Lady with the Lamp" ... [And] as the poet Longfellow sings—

*A lady with a lamp shall stand,  
In the great history of the land,  
A noble type of good,  
Heroic womanhood.*<sup>35</sup>

A shorter version of Nightingale's Crimean efforts, accompanied by the same soothing image, followed in 1912 with the exhortation, 'What great joy was hers when she found herself able to serve the sick and wounded soldiers! ... [T]he tender ministries of Florence Nightingale will be remembered long after the names of the generals who fought in the Crimean War have been forgotten'.<sup>36</sup>

Astonishingly, Nightingale was all but forgotten by the *School Paper* during the war, being mentioned only briefly in 1915. The first reference described her influence on Henri Dunant, the founder of the Red Cross, and the second was the full celebratory poem by Henry

Wadsworth Longfellow.<sup>37</sup> She was also not mentioned in the *Education Gazette*. Such omissions are all the more surprising given that editions of Edward Cook's *The Life of Florence Nightingale* had been released in 1913 and 1914. The Department—almost certainly its publications' editor, Charles Long—received such items from overseas or learnt of them through extensive networks. Long regularly used excerpts from such publications in the *School Paper* or recommended the whole publications to teachers in the monthly *Education Gazette* section, 'Notices of Books, School Material, Etc.'<sup>38</sup> But, on Nightingale, there was silence.

Another nurse, Sister Dora Pattison, was made known to Grade V-VI readers prior to the war in 1912. She had been inspired by Nightingale and had wanted to accompany her to the Crimea. However, readers were advised that her father had not permitted her to go. Pattison developed her nursing skills in Yorkshire and one of her patients described how, 'She'd make you laugh if you were dying.' Her face was 'aglow with the beauty of a loving, unselfish spirit'. Pattison died young as a consequence of her selflessness and, despite exhibiting many of the nurturing qualities that the Department admired in women, was not presented to readers again.<sup>39</sup>

Possibly the departmental leadership believed that women's yearnings to 'mother', nurture, to remain positive and be moral guardians—and perhaps even to become nurses—were instinctive and required little specific prompting by ongoing references to nurses as role models. General items such as 'Sunshine and Smiles', 'My Mother', 'To my Mother' and 'Babyland' conveyed all relevant traditional values, attitudes and activities, but did not take that next step of suggesting that, in such a critical time of war, nursing was a career for senior girl pupils and women teachers to pursue, including overseas.<sup>40</sup> This is surprising given the encouragements—exhortations—for females to do so much else for the war effort.

Moreover, amidst thousands of references in the *School Paper*, and the *Education Gazette*, memoranda and circulars about the experiences of departmental teacher-soldiers, and even a few to Nightingale and Sister Dora, the Department was silent about its one female nurse and one domestic science teacher who undertook medically-related war service overseas. Only a few facts are known about these two women as a consequence of some minimal departmental reporting *after* the war.



'Sister Margaret Waterstrom, OBE, School Nursing Staff', in EDV, *The Education Department's Record of War Service, 1914-1919*, Melbourne, Albert J. Mullett, 1921, p. 190

Before the war, Sister Margaret Waterstrom, O.B.E., had worked with the School Nursing Staff, visiting homes, interviewing parents, arranging for clothing from charities, demonstrating treatments, taking children to hospital if mothers were unable to do so, and monitoring truancy.<sup>41</sup> In December 1916, she embarked with the Indian Nursing Service, serving at three Indian hospitals and one in the Persian Gulf.<sup>42</sup> There are no records of her experiences in public repositories, but the reminiscences and correspondence of other nurses, as well as official histories, suggest that these postings were least-liked by nurses. Some expressed disappointment at their remoteness from battle fronts.

Service in India and the Persian Gulf entailed dry heat, humidity or monsoonal deluges with their attendant 'heat stroke' or tropical diseases. The women's service was made all the more uncomfortable with heavy uniforms, although a few nurses experienced cool respites briefly in Himalayan locations.<sup>43</sup>

Postings in India were assigned minimal importance in the war effort, possibly a view to which the Department subscribed, given the greater events taking place in the theatres of war.<sup>44</sup> The *Education Gazette* made one reference to India during the war that reinforced the image for teachers of an uneventful experience, publishing a statement from an unnamed Australian soldier there: 'Our life in India is a bed of roses compared with that of the poor chaps in France.'<sup>45</sup> Moreover, most Australian nurses based in India did not nurse Australians, mainly treating British and Indian soldiers as well as German and Turkish prisoners-of-war. Notwithstanding the nurses' own cultural complications in nursing non-Anglo-Saxon males who, at times, resisted their efforts, these facts probably diminished the likelihood of the activities appearing in the *School Paper* and the *Education Gazette*.<sup>46</sup>

Whether or not Waterstrom wrote to the Department, or to teachers who may or may not have passed on details of her experiences, is unknown. Certainly the Department would have known of the departure of its school nurse, yet Waterstrom was not presented to pupils or teachers in the pages of the *School Paper* while the war was in progress, and was only mentioned post-war in the *Education Department's Record of War Service*, complete with her O.B.E., pointedly in the section 'The Men Who Returned'.<sup>47</sup>

The Department's second woman to assume a role akin to nursing was Montague Cookery Centre's junior teacher and cookery instructress, Beryl Kaighin.<sup>48</sup> As a former Melbourne High School pupil when girls were enrolled, she was honoured in its magazine as one of its '1907-08 Class' chosen by the Defence Department to assist with invalid cookery.<sup>49</sup> Kaighin became a member of the Voluntary Aid Detachment with the Australian Imperial Force in August 1917. She subsequently managed the Red Cross Kitchen at No. 14 Australian General Hospital, Cairo, almost certainly spending most time at Port Said where the hospital was re-located for much of the war.<sup>50</sup> In one of her letters to Principal Joseph Hocking, written in June 1918, Kaighin explained how she had 'charge' of the Red Cross Kitchen that was 'doing the extras for bed



**Beryl Kaighin, VAD, in the Red Cross Kitchen at No. 14 Australian General Hospital, Port Said.** The table is covered with basins filled with giant biscuits for soaking in milk. AWM B0063

patients, making now between 700 and 800 meals each day'.<sup>51</sup> With her domestic science background and management skills, Kaighin probably contributed through her service to the conclusion of the *Official Medical History* that '[a]s much as possible was done [at Port Said] to supplement the ordinary rations'.<sup>52</sup>

The Department reported through the *School Paper* about comforts being distributed by the Red Cross to Australian servicemen. However, it was keen for its comforts-making tally not to be absorbed by that of the Red Cross, directing assertively in 1916 that, 'owing to the number of parcels that go astray ... [o]n no account should the words "Red Cross" be used'.<sup>53</sup> Yet, the work of Voluntary Aid Detachments was not mentioned in the *School Paper* or the *Education Gazette*. Neither was Kaighin brought to the attention of pupils or teachers. This may have been for the reason that angered the Victorian Lady Teachers' Association a decade earlier, that women teachers and school girls were as if non-existent.<sup>54</sup> Again the omission is surprising considering all other exhortations for women to contribute to the war effort.

Indeed, the lack of recognition given to Kaighin's war service was wider than that of the Education Department. One of the last references to Kaighin in Australian archival repositories is a letter written by her, in June 1922 to the British War Office, from New Zealand where she had moved post-war to marry a former New Zealand soldier. The letter pleaded for a response to previous requests she had made in Australia for her 'General Service Medal and Allied Medal'. She received the response from the British War Office in September 1922: '3<sup>rd</sup> District Base, Victoria Barracks, Melbourne ... will forward the medal immediately. As Egypt ceased to be a theatre of war after the 18<sup>th</sup> March 1916, you are not entitled to the award of the Victory Medal'.<sup>55</sup>

Did the Department, secretly, hold a prejudice against female nurses or women working in support roles to the military? Evidence for this thinking exists in the British Army and the Medical Services of the Australian Imperial Force. This was especially clear early in the war, with reasons given including that women were allegedly more of a challenge to manage than a benefit; were not appropriate for life in hospital camps and near battle fronts; were not suited to managing all possible medical conditions; and that discipline may be affected in the event of their sexual liaisons with men.<sup>56</sup> Did the Department perhaps also believe that the war would be short-lived, and that there would be insufficient time for senior girls or female teachers to undertake the extended formal training at a recognised hospital to become nurses?<sup>57</sup> Certainly, the Department believed that the war would be short-lived and when it was not over 'by Christmas 1914', the Department declared optimistically in September 1915 that it would be over by Christmas of that year.<sup>58</sup> Yet, there is no firm evidence in departmental sources for these explanations and, in the latter case, does not excuse the absence of reporting on the Voluntary Aid Detachments for which nursing training was not a pre-requisite.

A review of the *School Paper* and the *Education Gazette* across the period prompts consideration of a further set of gendered omissions. The Department avoided publicising the fact that, as the war progressed, Australian women were increasingly entering the paid workforce and assuming traditionally male occupations. By 1916, one-third of factory workers were female, and women's employment in the workforce expanded from twenty-four per cent in 1914 to thirty-seven per cent in 1918. The statistics are initially impressive, although further research

has revealed that Australian women were not pressured to undertake paid work to the extent of British, French or German women, with their greater male populations as well as geographical locations nearer battle fronts. Indeed, in Australia, there was a loss of twenty thousand male jobs with only four thousand women filling the vacancies.<sup>59</sup> Possibly the Department feared the potential of moral dislocation on a wider scale across the Australian community, than any benefits secured by encouraging more women to join the workforce locally.

Yet there may be one more significant and pragmatic reason why the Department's female teachers or senior pupils were never actively encouraged to enter the wider Australian workforce, or to vacate the home front for overseas work. The earlier reference to women teachers attending Flower Day training 'without closing the school' provides a powerful clue. Without the presence of senior girls and women teachers 'continuing to teach' in a Department from which a staggering fifty per cent of male teachers of eligible age had enlisted, many of Victoria's schools would have closed.<sup>60</sup>

Simply stated, senior girls and women were needed to take the place of departing male teachers. The Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for the Year 1915–16 stated that 'nearly one-half of the teachers of woodwork centers have enlisted'.<sup>61</sup> Also, despite suggestions that technical school teachers need *not* enlist, many had. For the financial year 1915–16, the Minister of Public Instruction, Harold Lawson, wrote that Victoria's technical schools had lost 'about one-third of the specialist teachers', while they were expected to train increasing numbers of partly-disabled soldiers.<sup>62</sup> Lawson called for these irreplaceable teachers to be prevented from enlisting. In May 1916 the Commonwealth instructed state recruiting authorities to turn away anyone who said he was a technical school teacher.<sup>63</sup>

Not surprisingly, recruitment authorities did not have a firm definition of 'technical teacher'. There was confusion as to whether a technical teacher was any male from a junior technical school; or a specialist trade teacher, such as a woodwork teacher in a woodwork/sloyd or manual training centre usually attached to a high school; or a teacher in a technical college.<sup>64</sup> A close reading of biographies in the *Education Department's Record of War Service* suggests that recruitment authorities either unwittingly or intentionally accepted the services of technical school teachers. The Department's silence about this

reality suggests that the Department did not object.<sup>65</sup> Thus, because any available male teachers would have been a priority for placement in the above kinds of schools, women teachers were needed in more mainstream schools elsewhere.

Women teachers were especially needed where teacher shortages were most critical, that is, in remote rural areas. Coinciding with the end of the Department's peak teacher enlistment period in mid-1915, head teachers in country schools were told to be available to train (out of hours at a convenient time and for pay), any suitable local men as well as women who had the Merit Certificate. The trainees had to be 18 years of age by the conclusion of training. The 'temporary' male teachers would initially receive £120 per annum to a maximum of £200 over yearly increments; the females, £100 to £130, and all would work in the schools as if qualified. They would be eligible for registration following satisfactory performance, and then be able to apply for advertised positions. They would also be eligible to secure higher pay if they achieved 'higher literary qualifications' and demonstrated 'zeal and energy in the discharge of duty'.<sup>66</sup> For 'young people of good education', including girls, the Melbourne Teachers' College also offered a special short course for the staffing of small rural schools.<sup>67</sup>

Further measures to fill the gaps caused by male teacher enlistments were necessary. Many existing college trainees were released into schools before they had concluded their courses. By May 1916 due to the number of eligible men enlisting, the college's principal, Dr John Smyth, reported that 'mainly on account of the war' there was the lowest percentage of males since the College had opened, with female students constituting seventy-three per cent.<sup>68</sup> These women were probably engaged in the College's initiative, fully supported by the Department, in conducting correspondence classes with children in remote rural schools that were too difficult to staff.<sup>69</sup>

Indeed, so serious was the teacher shortage, that female teachers who had been required by the Married Women's Act of 1894 to resign upon marriage, were invited back. The Act had been passed on the grounds of economy measures during the 1890s Depression; also in the belief that because a married woman was not the family 'breadwinner', a male could provide financial support.<sup>70</sup> The Depression had passed but the Act had not been repealed. The first women teachers welcomed back were those married to soldiers, then other married women. Finally,

women who had made the life-defining choice of career or marriage, and who had chosen a teaching career and had since retired, were induced to return.<sup>71</sup> The Department did not call directly on girls and women to promote the recruitment cause. However, an unintended consequence of females' highly visible, first-time entry, or return to schools in previously unthinkable circumstances, almost certainly added to pressures on male teachers of eligible age who had not yet enlisted, to do so.

Teaching further presented itself as a desirable career option because other career paths were closed to women.<sup>72</sup> The alternative paths were all the more 'closed' because the Department did not mention their existence. Besides, any promotion of non-teaching career possibilities may have discouraged the many 'practical patriots' within the State school community—those making comforts, raising funds, visiting hospitals and caring for the bereaved. More than anything, Victoria's educated and patriotic women were required in schools.

During the war and immediately after, the Department thanked and praised its women teachers, especially those who had 'realized the obligation that rests upon them' and staffed country schools.<sup>73</sup> But it conveyed this gratitude only in administrative documents and in its 1921 formal publication of the *Education Department's Record of War Service*, not in the *School Paper* available to pupils monthly during the war. An impression exists that the Department did not want to cultivate in young minds or the wider community's view, an ongoing acceptance of larger numbers of women in the paid teacher workforce. The acceptance and 'return' of so many women teachers appears to have been a short-term solution to a short-term problem—an impression confirmed once the war was over, when returned men and teacher-training resumed pre-war routines, and the married and retired women were no longer required.<sup>74</sup> Although needing them to teach during the war, the Department had made no promises for life beyond; appointments had been formally named from the outset as 'temporary'.<sup>75</sup>

Many women appear to have resumed and affirmed their domestic roles in their homes and, whether begrudgingly feeling exploited or feeling satisfied with their contribution, made little comment in public records.<sup>76</sup> The organisation that might have represented any women wishing to continue their teaching careers, the Victorian Lady Teachers' Association, had split and weakened during the war.<sup>77</sup> Many women teachers appear to have resisted controversial politics in the belief

that it was better to assist fund-raising and comforts-making than appear 'churlish and ungrateful' for others' sacrifices. Because of such incoherence, the association did not attract young members during these years.<sup>78</sup>

By 1918, when war weariness and the scope of reporting on military and often tragic events of the war challenged the Department to assess what was most important in its publications—all the more with paper shortages—the references to 'girls' and 'women' and their contributions all but disappeared. Yet, when mentioned at all, the women's wartime contributions were couched as voluntary and of the traditional kind, with few exceptions. Women might have left the home as never before, but not the home front. When competent and patriotic senior girls and women engaged in wartime employment, it was in staffing Victoria's schools, without expectations of an ongoing kind.

While 'every facility' was granted in clear terms to the Department's senior boys and male teachers to vacate their classrooms for recruitment depots, girls and women teachers had to negotiate a complex mix of requests and silences, to determine what was possible and preferred during their Great War.<sup>79</sup> Their actions were confined by traditional gender roles and the short-term need to keep schools functioning.

#### NOTES:

- 1 Ewen Francis Maclean, formerly of Tabilk state school, was the only teacher-soldier with the initials 'E.F.M.': Education Department, Victoria (EDV), *The Education Department's Record of War Service, 1914-1919*, Melbourne, Albert J. Mullett, 1921, p. 163.
- 2 For fuller discussions of the purposes and expected uses of the *School Paper* and the *Education Gazette* in Victoria, see Brian McKinlay, ed., *School Days: Looking Back on Education in Victoria*, Melbourne, Robert Andersen, 1985, and *Young Anzacs: The Contribution of Victorian Schools to the Gallipoli Campaign*, Melbourne, Ministry of Education, 1990; as well as Peter Musgrave, *To be an Australian? Victorian School Textbooks and National Identity 1895-1965*, Paradigm Papers, no. 1, Colloquium on Textbooks, Schools and Society, Clayton, Monash University, 1996, p. 15; 'Was there a "Departmental Index" (*Argus*, 24.8.10) in Victoria between 1872 and 1930?', *Education Research and Perspectives*, vol. 22, no. 2, December 1995; and, 'Distributor and Publisher: Victorian Education Departments and the Supply of Textbooks, 1851-1945', *Education Research and Perspectives*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1997.
- 3 'How the Work Goes on', *School Paper*, V-VI, August 1915, p. 108.
- 4 For discussions on Frank Tate, see R.J.W. Selleck, *Frank Tate: A Biography*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1982; and, of Charles Long, see R.J.W. Selleck, 'Charles Richard Long (1860-1944)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 10: 1891-

1939, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1986, pp. 133-4; and, E.L. French, 'Introduction to the Life of Charles R. Long', and, C.R. Long, 'The Recollections of Charles Richard Long', *Melbourne Studies in Education*, 1963, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1964. For works of both men during the Great War, see Triolo, 'Our Schools and the War', Kew, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2012.

- 5 'How to Serve One's Country', *School Paper*, III-IV, October 1914, p. 159; and, *School Paper*, V-VI, October 1914, p. 157. For references in the *School Paper* to girls' knitting, see, 'Knitting', *School Paper*, VII-VIII, November 1915, p. 157, 'Helping the Soldiers', *School Paper*, III-IV, April 1915, p. 46; and, 'The Knitting Lesson', *School Paper*, V-VI, August 1917, p. 102.
- 6 *School Paper*, V-VI and VII-VIII, July 1917-18. For a fuller discussion of self-denial, see Triolo, chpt. 2.
- 7 'Teachers Volunteering for the War', *Education Gazette*, January 1916, p. 7.
- 8 *Report of the Victorian Lady Teachers' Association, 1905*, in Judith Biddington, 'The Weekes Family', in R.J.W. Selleck and Martin Sullivan, eds, *Not so Eminent Victorians*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1984, p. 147.
- 9 'What are we Fighting for?', *School Paper*, VII-VIII, September 1914, p. 150.
- 10 'Letters from the Firing Line: In Praise of our Troops', *School Paper*, VII-VIII, April 1915, p. 43.
- 11 'An Appeal to British Boys' and Girls', *School Paper*, VII-VIII, December 1914, p. 198.
- 12 'The Brave at Home', *School Paper*, VII-VIII, June 1915, p. 77. See also, 'The Pivot of the War', *School Paper*, VII-VIII, July 1915, pp. 85-6; 'Jim', *School Paper*, VII-VIII, August 1915, pp. 100-01; and, 'The Little Homes', Supplement, *School Paper*, VII-VIII, April 1916, pp. 4-5.
- 13 'From the Front', *School Paper*, V-VI, May 1916, p. 61. No teacher-soldier had the initials 'F.D.R.': *The Education Department's Record of War Service, 1914-1919*.
- 14 For examples of historians who have recently acknowledged the voluntary contributions of women during the Great War, see Joan Beaumont, *Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War*, Crows Nest, Allen & Unwin, 2014; Michael McKernan, *Victoria at War, 1914-18*, Sydney, New South, 2014; and, Melanie Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity: 100 Years of Australian Red Cross*, Sydney, HarperCollins, 2014.
- 15 'Teachers and Politics', *Education Gazette*, May 1910, p. 99.
- 16 For examples of these activities by girls as indicated in the Education Department of Victoria's War Relief Fund Minutes, 1914-22, see Minutes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting, 7 September 1914, 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 26 July 1915, and 27<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 29 March 1917. See also Winifred Grassick's account of her school day activities, 'Krowera in War and Peace', *Royal Historical Journal of Victoria*, vol. 54, no. 1, March 1983, p. 53. For examples of the postcards sold, see Sir Ian Hamilton's Message: 'Cards Obtainable', *Education Gazette*, August 1915, p. 455; 'Souvenir of the Children's Physical Training Display, December 1916', *Education Gazette*, April 1917, p. 58; 'Postcards of Anzac and Mudros', *Education Gazette*, June 1916, p. 140; and, Olwen Ford, *Harvester Town: The Making of Sunshine, 1890-1925*, Sunshine, Sunshine & District Historical Society, 2001, pp. 177-8, 183, 185-6, 194-200.

- 17 For examples, see Grassick, p. 45. For further examples of concerts, see *Gap Special Edition*, [a reprint of items published in the *Gap: A School Magazine Produced by the Teachers of the Bairnsdale Inspectorate, 1920-26*], n.l., n.p., 1985, p. 152; 'Schools' Patriotic Fund: Old English Evening', *Ours: Melbourne High School Magazine*, September 1917, p. 7; and, 'Ballarat High School Concert and Sale of Gifts', *Education Gazette*, August 1915, p. 470.
- 18 For examples, see 'Education Department's War Relief Fund: Report of Proceedings of the Executive', *Education Gazette*, June 1915, p. 246; 'How they Help', *School Paper*, III-IV, December 1916, p. 175; 'Help from Gnotuk', *Education Gazette*, April 1916, p. 79; Hal Porter, *The Watcher on the Cast-Iron Balcony*, London, Faber & Faber, 1963, p. 42; Judy Leslie, *Kensington School No. 2374*, Kensington, Kensington Primary School, 1981, p. 32; and, J. Hocking, *Story of Melbourne High School, 1905-1921*, Melbourne, Specialty, 1922, pp. 54-5.
- 19 For examples, see 'Notices', *School Paper*, V-VI, November 1918, p. 148; 'Our Schools and the War', *School Paper*, III-IV, November 1918, p. 159; 'The Transmutation of Metals', *Education Gazette*, February 1917, p. 34; and, Gwen McWilliam, *A School for Hawthorn: Glenferrie State School*, Glenferrie, n.p., 1975, p. 32.
- 20 For examples, see 'Notices', *School Paper*, V-VI, November 1918, p. 148; 'Agriculture and the War Relief Fund', *Education Gazette*, March 1916, p. 66; and, *The Education Department's Record of War Service, 1914-1919*, p. 216.
- 21 *The Education Department's Record of War Service, 1914-1919*, p. 217.
- 22 'Street Selling on Children's Flower Day', *Education Gazette*, September 1916, p. 229.
- 23 'Children's Flower Day, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1916', *Education Gazette*, August 1916, p. 190; Education Department of Victoria's War Relief Fund Minutes, 1914-22, 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 18 July 1916; and, EDV, Memo. 16/221, 16 October 1916, Typograph 1916. The first item was reproduced with amended date in *the Education Gazette*, August 1917, pp. 108-09.
- 24 'Children's Flower Day, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1916', *Education Gazette*, August 1916, p. 190; and, August 1917, pp. 108-09; and, *The Education Department's Record of War Service, 1914-1919*, pp. 225-7.
- 25 'A Fine Show', *School Paper*, III-IV, April 1917, p. 37.
- 26 Grassick, p. 44.
- 27 'How to Serve One's Country', *School Paper*, III-IV, October 1914, p. 159.
- 28 "'Are we Downhearted?'"', *School Paper*, VII-VIII, November 1916, pp. 145-6.
- 29 'Our Debt to our Soldiers', Supplement, *School Paper*, V-VI, April 1916, p. 2, and VII-VIII, April 1916, p. 2.
- 30 For examples of very brief references, see 'Orphans of War', *School Paper*, V-VI, June 1916, p. 78; and, 'War Relief: Australia and France', *School Paper*, III-IV, September 1917, p. 127.
- 31 Victorian Education Department Patriotic League Executive Meeting Minutes, book's inside cover, VA 714, VPRS 14009, Public Record Office Victoria, Melbourne (PROV); and, 'Victorian Education Department's Patriotic Fund', *Education Gazette*, October 1914, p. 373.
- 32 'Victorian Education Department's Patriotic Fund', *Education Gazette*, October 1914, p. 373; and, Victorian Education Department Patriotic League Executive Meeting Minutes, 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 29 September 1914, VA 714, VPRS 14009 (PROV).
- 33 'Florence Nightingale', *School Paper*, Class IV, December 1898, p. 110.
- 34 'The Eastern Question and the Crimean War', *School Paper*, IV, July 1898, p. 29.
- 35 'Florence Nightingale', *School Paper*, IV, November 1910, pp. 145-9 and, V-VI, November 1910, pp. 146-9.
- 36 'Florence Nightingale', *School Paper*, VII-VIII, May 1912, pp. 60-1.
- 37 'The Red Cross', *School Paper*, VII-VIII, May 1915, p. 57; and, 'A Lady with a Lamp', *School Paper*, VII-VIII, October 1915, p. 130.
- 38 Janet Butler, *Kitty's War: The Remarkable Wartime Experiences of Kit McNaughton*, St. Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 2013, p. 14; and, Edward Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, London, Macmillan, 1913 and 1914.
- 39 'Sister Dora', *School Paper*, V-VI, September 1912, pp. 124-5.
- 40 'Sunshine and Smiles', *School Paper*, III-IV, September 1916, p. 125; 'My Mother', *School Paper*, III-IV, August 1916, pp. 106-7; 'To my Mother', *School Paper*, V-VI, July 1917, p. 87; and, 'Babyland', *School Paper*, III-IV, March 1917, p. 30.
- 41 *Report of the Minister for Public Instruction, 1916-17*, Victoria, pp. 22-3.
- 42 Sister Margaret B. Waterstrom: *The Education Department's Record of War Service, 1914-1919*, p. 190. The three hospitals were Colaba War Hospital, Bombay; No. 44 British General Hospital, Deolali; the Officers' Convalescent Hospital at Nasik; and, No. 42 British General Hospital, Bushire, in the Persian Gulf.
- 43 Kirsty Harris, *More than Bombs and Bandages: Australian Army Nurses at Work in World War I*, Newport, Big Sky, 2011, pp. 76, 159; Melanie Oppenheimer, *Oceans of Love: Narrelle—An Australian Nurse in World War I*, Sydney, ABC Books, 2006, especially chpt. 9 for 'respite'.
- 44 A.G. Butler, (ed.), *The Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-1918*, Melbourne, Australian War Memorial, 3 vols, 1930-1943, vol. 3, p. 568; Ruth Rae, 'Reading between Unwritten Lines: Australian Army Nurses in India, 1916-19', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, no. 36, May 2002, p. 7; Rupert Goodman, *Our War Nurses: The History of the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps, 1902-1988*, Bowen Hills, Boolaraong, 1988, p. 75; and, Jan Bassett, *Guns and Brooches: Australian Army Nursing from the Boer War to the Gulf War*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 76.
- 45 'From Soldiers' Letters', *Education Gazette*, October 1915, p. 530.
- 46 Goodman, p. 81; Harris, p. 143; Gertrude F. Moberly, *Experiences of a 'Dinki Di' R.R.C. Nurse*, Glebe, Australasian Medical, 1933, p. 107; and, Rae, pp. 1, 3.
- 47 *The Education Department's Record of War Service, 1914-1919*, p. 190.
- 48 Teacher Record, Beryl Magnay Kaighin, No. 16265 – Montague Cookery Centre, VA 714, VPRS 13579 (PROV).
- 49 'Ode to the Editor', *Ours*, September 1917, p. 7.

- 50 *The Education Department's Record of War Service, 1914-1919*, p. 190, p. 150; and, A.G. Butler, ed., *The Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-1918*, Melbourne, Australian War Memorial, 3 vols, 1930-1943, vol. 1, pp. 642, 646, 652 and vol. 3, pp. 538, 567.
- 51 'From a Red Cross Worker in Egypt', *Ours*, May 1919, p. 26. Beryl's surname is misspelt 'Raighin'.
- 52 A.G. Butler, vol. 1, p. 642.
- 53 See, for example, 'The Red Cross', *School Paper*, VII-VIII, May 1915, pp. 56-60; 'Our Schools and the War: The Red Cross Appeal', *School Paper*, V-VI, April 1918, p. 46; and, 'Our Schools and the War: The Red Cross Appeal', *School Paper*, V-VI, May 1918, p. 63. 'How to Address Parcels', *Education Gazette*, April 1916, p. 79 – Departmental emphasis.
- 54 *Report of the Victorian Lady Teachers' Association, 1905*, in Biddington, in Selleck and Sullivan, p. 147.
- 55 B. Kaighin Personal File Base Records, at <http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/scripts/Imagine.asp?B=6031514&I=1&SE=1> (NAA). Research courtesy of Carole Hooper.
- 56 Bassett, pp. 19-20; Janet Butler, p. 10.
- 57 Harris, p. 19.
- 58 'Progress of the War', *School Paper*, VII-VIII, September 1915, p. 126.
- 59 Patricia Grimshaw, Marilyn Lake, Ann McGrath and Marian Quartly, *Creating a Nation*, South Yarra, McPhee Gribble, 1994, p. 209; and, Jennifer Crew, 'Women's Wages in Britain and Australia during the First World War', *Labour History*, no. 57, 1989, p. 30.
- 60 Brendan Murray suggests that 'two-thirds' of the Department's age-eligible men enlisted: 'Citizenship and Schooling: A Study of the Citizenship Ethos and Schooling in Victorian State and Catholic Systems, 1910-1918', MA thesis, Monash University, 1981, p. 165; but Frank Tate declared that of approximately 1,500 men between the ages of 18 and 45 years in the service of the Education Department of Victoria, 'no fewer than 752 volunteered': *The Education Department's Record of War Service, 1914-1919*, p. 3. The number of enlistees was, in fact, 753, due to confusion over two men with the surname 'Thompson', both of whom died. Considering that Tate would have made the most generous possible claim, the figure of 'half' is more acceptable: Triolo, especially p. 110.
- 61 *Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for the Year 1915-16*, Victoria, 1917, p. 11.
- 62 *Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for the Year 1915-16*, Victoria, 1917, pp. 15-6.
- 63 L.L. Robson, *The First AIF: A Study of its Recruitment 1914-18*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1970, p. 55.
- 64 A good example of the relationship between the Department and private industry at this time can be seen in the founding and development of Sunshine Technical School, Ford, 2001.
- 65 *The Education Department's Record of War Service, 1914-1919*; and, Triolo, pp. 126-8.
- 66 'Employment in State Schools', *Education Gazette*, August 1915, p. 449.
- 67 *Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for the Year 1915-16*, Victoria, 1917, p. 9; and, Don Garden, *The Melbourne Teacher Training Colleges: From Training Institution to Melbourne State College, 1870-1982*, Richmond, Heinemann, 1982, p. 107.
- 68 'Editorial', *Trainee*, December 1915, p. 5; 'Teachers' College: Proportion of Men and Women since 1900', *Education Gazette*, May 1916, p. 123; and, the *Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for the Year 1915-16*, Victoria, 1917, p. 9.
- 69 *Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for the Year 1916-17*, Victoria, 1918, p. 6.
- 70 Biddington, in Selleck and Sullivan, p. 146; J. McDonald, 'Victorian Teachers and the 1890s Depression', in A.D. Spaul, ed., *Australian Teachers: From Colonial Schoolmasters to Militant Professionals*, South Melbourne, Macmillan, 1977, p. 191; and, Kay Whitehead, 'The Spinster Teacher in Australia from the 1870s to the 1960s', *History of Education Review*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2007.
- 71 *Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for the Year 1916-17*, Victoria, 1918, p. 13; and, former-inspector David Clare Holloway research papers, in the author's possession.
- 72 Don Garden, *Victoria: A History*, Melbourne, Nelson, 1984, p. 326.
- 73 *Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for the Year 1916-17*, Victoria, 1918, p. 1; *The Education Department's Record of War Service, 1914-1919*, p. 215; and, Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police* (1975), Ringwood, Penguin, rev., 1994, p. 434-5.
- 74 See, for example, L.J. Blake, (ed.), *Vision and Realisation: A Centenary History of State Education in Victoria*, EDV, Melbourne, 1973, 'Manor Estate' example, p. 132. Former-inspector David Clare Holloway research papers, in the author's possession.
- 75 *Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for the Year 1916-17*, Victoria, 1918, p. 13.
- 76 Summers, 1994, pp. 434-6.
- 77 Judith Biddington, 'The Role of Women in the Victorian Education Department, 1872-1925', MEd thesis, University of Melbourne, 1977, p. 127-9; and, Biddington, in Selleck and Sullivan, 1984, p. 148.
- 78 Biddington, 1977, pp. 127-9. The Victorian Lady Teachers' Association was represented on the International Sisterhood of Peace and the Women's Political Association by Clara Weekes, but she was long-retired and aged over 70: Biddington, 1977, p. 125. No women teachers were members of the Industrial Workers of the World according to wartime membership lists surveyed by Joy Damousi: *Women Come Rally*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 44.
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## Federal Government House Headquarters of the Australian Red Cross

*Carole Woods*

### **Abstract**

*Lady Helen Munro Ferguson, the high-born altruistic wife of the Australian governor general, founded the Australian Red Cross in response to the outbreak of the Great War. She made Federal Government House, Melbourne, the headquarters of a vast humanitarian organisation that extended across Australia and overseas to Egypt, Britain and France. Federal Government House was the financial and policy hub of the Australian Red Cross during the Great War, and a huge depot for the receipt and despatch of goods. As this article was written for the RHSV conference on 'Victorians and the Home Front', it refers only briefly to Australian Red Cross services beyond Victoria.*

Lady Helen Munro Ferguson founded the Australian Red Cross in August 1914 and was ideally suited to leadership of the new society. As the daughter of Lord Dufferin, former viceroy of India, and wife of Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson, a former Liberal politician in Britain, she was accustomed to moving in diplomatic and political circles. Steeped in the philanthropic traditions of her mother and class, Lady Helen became a founder of the Red Cross in Scotland and president of her local branch in Fife.<sup>1</sup> In May 1914 she arrived in Melbourne with her husband, newly appointed governor general of Australia, at Federal Government House, so called because Melbourne was then the seat of the federal government.

Lady Helen responded quickly and decisively to the outbreak of war and powerful surge of patriotism with a rallying cry to civilians that appeared in newspapers throughout Australia. Asserting that 'Every member of the community is anxious to take some part in the defence of the Empire', she urged non-combatants, and especially women, to assist the sick and wounded through a national Red Cross society.<sup>2</sup> At a meeting at Federal Government House on 13 August, Lady Helen became president of the new Australian Branch of the British Red Cross Society and she invited the wives of state governors to lead state

divisions. The governor of Victoria, Sir Arthur Stanley, and his wife, Margaret, resided at Stonnington in Malvern and it was from there and a city office that Lady Stanley directed the Victorian Division, founded on 21 August. Meanwhile, Lady Helen had designated Federal Government House as the headquarters of the national Red Cross.

Federal Government House became the hub of a vast, largely volunteer, interlocking humanitarian enterprise that covered Australia and extended to Egypt, England, France and beyond. The former splendid ballroom was transformed into a central depot dominated by rows of trestle tables piled high with pyjamas, shirts, socks, scarves, mittens and balaclavas. Other areas were reserved for old linen, medical supplies, a packing department, offices and a book depot where the Victoria League organised supplies of books to troopships, camps and hospitals. The foyer was jammed full with foodstuffs donated by state schools throughout Victoria, while a men's section in the stables produced items such as crutches, bedside lockers, folding tables and trays. The congestion caused the disconcerted hall porter to gloomily predict that the governor general would soon have to carry out official duties from a tent in the garden.<sup>3</sup>

Philadelphia Robertson, secretary of the Australian Red Cross, vividly portrayed the scene at Federal Government House in her book, *Red Cross Yesterdays*. One of the few paid staff, she kept minutes, handled correspondence and produced a monthly newsletter while ensconced in her office in the tower. Her tact, 'unremitting labour' and grasp of detail facilitated the smooth running of the society. Lady Helen supervised the society's far-flung operations from a room overlooking a terraced garden, and chaired central council and finance committee meetings in the drawing room. The honorary treasurer, Sir Edward Miller, financier and former politician, recorded generous donations but, as he burrowed into his pile of papers 'like a worried opossum', his blue eyes clouded with anxiety at the society's ever increasing expenditure.<sup>4</sup> He cabled substantial sums 'home' to the British Red Cross Society for the care of Australian wounded soldiers, and Lady Helen read out the British response at a central council meeting on 20 October 1914: 'Words fail adequately to express our satisfaction and pleasure at the splendid support of this the youngest of our Branches.'<sup>5</sup>

'Up the beautiful avenue leading from St Kilda Road to Government House, instead of cars bearing guests to vice-regal receptions, as in



**Special Red Cross wholemeal biscuits for prisoners of war.** Australian Red Cross Society (B.R.C.S.), Annual Report, 1916-17. Courtesy of Australian Red Cross Archives

former days, rolled carriers' waggons from the railways' laden with hampers full of garments and bandages and bearing the names of Red Cross branches from all over the state. 'From the Murray to the sea, from the Mallee to Croajingalong, they came', and then returned with rolls of flannel, skeins of wool and old linen for making into further supplies.<sup>6</sup> These goods were sorted, packed and mostly shipped overseas, although some were reserved for distribution to the wounded at home. Mr Mackrell, the indefatigable transportation officer at Federal Government House, organised 108 shipments comprising over 38,000 packages in 1916-17; of these, four shipments were lost through enemy action.<sup>7</sup>

Walter Towns, manager of the depot at Federal Government House throughout the war, performed duties with 'the utmost energy and efficiency'. In November 1914, he reported that the donation of goods was 'exceptionally numerous', causing staff to work sometimes until 10 pm. A photographer from the *Australasian* caught an official outside Government House looking dazed by the mounting stacks of cases, all stamped with a Red Cross and awaiting despatch. During one record week in July 1915, staff sent off over nine hundred cases. By 1917, Walter

Towns was supported by 9 salaried assistants, 40 voluntary workers in daily attendance, and nearly three hundred others at rostered times.<sup>8</sup> The volunteers were predominantly women.

Walter Towns recorded the rapid proliferation of branches in Victoria, sometimes several in one suburb such as St Kilda and in the main regional centres. Geelong, Ballarat and Warrnambool were the most productive of the regional cities. In February 1915, new branches at Apollo Bay, Cobden, Doncaster, Essendon, Maryborough, Omeo, Redesdale, Rutherglen, Traralgon and Warburton brought the tally to two hundred. Overwhelmingly, middle-class women working as volunteers made up the membership of these branches and produced garments but, in November 1915, the Red Cross launched a men's section to supply items from carpentry workshops. When branches in Victoria peaked at nearly nine hundred in 1918, Walter Towns declared that their work was 'beyond all praise'.<sup>9</sup>

Federal Government House became the focus of a huge community response that went far beyond official branches; Sargood Bros and Ball & Welch donated packing assistance, while Mayne Nickless and other companies offered transport services. The Myer store in Bourke Street was the first to provide a window display to publicise Red Cross work. Buckley & Nunn's emporium followed, and soon shops across Victoria replicated these displays. Walter Towns promoted the campaign by dressing windows himself in Bendigo, Warrnambool and elsewhere.

The Red Cross rode a wave of imperial patriotism in Australia, manifest in endless references to 'the Motherland', the waving of Union Jacks at festive occasions, and the popularity of 'Rule Britannia' and 'The Empire Flag'. Some local sheet music such as 'Song of the Red Cross Corps' and 'The Red Cross Nurse' channelled patriotism specifically towards the Red Cross. Children were caught up in this fervour. Thus Lady Stanley proudly noted on 12 June 1916 that her young son, Edward, went to tea at Federal Government House 'in full military dress, a large black band round his arm' in mourning for Lord Kitchener who had recently perished at sea after his ship struck a German mine. Melbourne *Punch* commented in 1918 on a fund-raising function at the Melbourne Town Hall that included a song by two little sisters, Phyllis and Beryl Moyle, 'who looked like tiny mascots—one dressed as an Australian Soldier and the other as a Red Cross Nurse'.<sup>10</sup>

Marilyn Lake and other historians have discussed the dramatic narrowing of horizons in Australia during the war, the smothering of cosmopolitanism.<sup>11</sup> This is exemplified by Vera Deakin, who studied cello under German teacher Louis Hattenbach in Melbourne and, later, singing under Herr Alexander Heinemann, one of the foremost lieder singers of his day, in Berlin and Budapest. In 1915, she assisted her father, Alfred Deakin, with his presidency of the Australian Commission at the Panama–Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco. War changed Vera from a cosmopolitan, cultivated young woman to a fervent, pro-conscriptionist patriot. Yet, it was patriotism that catapulted her from a conventional suburban existence—in her case a planned career as a kindergarten teacher—to international standing as honorary secretary of the Australian Red Cross Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau. Vera started her lifetime work for the Red Cross at Federal Government House, where she sorted garments.

The Red Cross central council at Federal Government House initiated and monitored an extensive network of overseas services. The first two commissioners, Adrian Knox, a Sydney barrister, and Norman Brookes, businessman and tennis champion, organised supplies to hospitals and convalescent homes in Egypt, and to field hospitals on the island of Lemnos and Anzac Cove on the Gallipoli Peninsula. It was Norman Brookes who invited Vera Deakin and her friend, Winifred Johnson, to open the Australian Enquiry Bureau in Cairo in October 1915. The central council appointed 'searchers' such as Stanley Addison, a science graduate from Adelaide, to enquire about missing men in hospitals and army camps.

Most initial enquiries were channelled through information bureaus, organised and financed by the legal profession in each Australian state. In Melbourne, J. Beacham Kiddle, lawyer and father of historian Margaret Kiddle, managed the Information Bureau at 60 Market Street. At 6 feet, 8 inches tall, Kiddle was unsuited to military service as he would have been an easy target for a sniper. After visiting the Melbourne bureau in December 1915, Lady Helen Munro Ferguson expressed satisfaction with the meticulous record keeping. The bureau later systematically interviewed returned soldiers for information as to missing men. By 1917, twelve salaried staff were needed to assist volunteers with the constant stream of enquiries.<sup>12</sup>

The Australian Defence Department conferred the honorary rank of lieutenant colonel in the Army Medical Corps on Red Cross commissioners to facilitate their movement into areas of hostilities. Lieutenant Colonel James Murdoch, assisted by a finance committee, supervised services in Britain that included the storage and distribution of Red Cross goods, hospital visiting and convalescence projects; the central council paid for a rehabilitation workshop at Southall Hospital, which cared for soldiers who had lost a limb, and assistance for blinded soldiers who were sent to St Dunstan's Hospital. Murdoch also supported the opening of a prisoner-of-war department under Mary Chomley in 1916, which supplied fortnightly parcels of food and garments to Australian prisoners of war in Germany and assistance to those in Turkey. Commissioner Edwin Walter Hayward, partner in the firm of John Martin and Co. in Adelaide, managed the distribution of supplies from five depots to medical units in France.

Throughout the war, the Australian Red Cross supported allied societies overseas, especially the Red Cross in France and Belgium, through fund-raising and the despatch of goods. In 1916–17, the Australian society sent large gifts of clothing and food to the French Red Cross, and consignments of warm clothing to the Italian and Romanian Red Cross societies and to hospitals in Belgium and Salonica.<sup>13</sup>

On the home front, Lady Helen secured the right to establish Red Cross depots at all Australian military hospitals and camps, and the society was soon supplying comforts and equipment to about 25 in Victoria; these included the Alfred Hospital, Artillery Camp, Essendon, and Clearing Hospitals at Broadmeadows, Ballarat, Geelong, Seymour and the Showgrounds.<sup>14</sup> The Red Cross filled a significant gap in treatment of convalescent soldiers by providing rest or recreation rooms at most hospitals; typically these would contain a billiard table, books, piano and gramophone. The showpiece was the rest home next to Caulfield Military Hospital, which Lady Helen opened in August 1916.

The central council at Federal Government House supervised plans for a central rest home, mainly for soldiers in transit to other states, at Wirth's Park (now the Arts Centre), St Kilda Road, in 1915. This was the headquarters of the Red Cross Voluntary Aid Detachments and some two hundred women VADs formed the staff of the home. Convalescent and rehabilitation services increased with the loan of two private homes. In December 1915, Lady Helen opened the attractive Highton, lent



**Demonstration of Red Cross Depot Work at Buckley & Nunn's, Melbourne.** Australian Branch of the British Red Cross Society, Victorian Division, *Annual Report*, 1917–18. Courtesy of Australian Red Cross Archives

by Mr and Mrs George Doery and financed by Camberwell residents. Located in Mont Albert Road, Canterbury, today it is part of Camberwell Grammar School. Dr Ramsay Mailer, a nerve specialist, lent his home, Heathersett, in Burwood (now part of PLC). Surrounded by avenues of pine trees and flower gardens, this home could accommodate about twenty soldiers suffering from nerve disorders.<sup>15</sup> Convalescent soldiers gained further support from an amelioration committee in Victoria, which mitigated family debts and funded disability equipment, and excursions organised by a volunteer motor corps.

The need to finance expanding services was a continual concern for members of the central council and prompted them in April 1916 to hold an auction sale of old furniture, silver, china and curios at Federal Government House. However, it was Margaret, Lady Stanley, president of the Victorian Division, who spearheaded three major fund-raising campaigns in Victoria and provided financial windfalls for Federal Government House. Although told at the outset that, as Red Cross

headquarters was located in Melbourne, the Victorian Division would play a very subordinate role, Margaret harboured little resentment, mainly because her heart was elsewhere; she liked to retreat from public duties to her five children, two of whom were born in Melbourne, and the constant refrain in her letters was her longing for her English home.

Lady Stanley was initially apprehensive about public speaking and 'jellified with terror' when she first chaired a meeting of the Victoria League but, coming from a family of amateur thespians, she soon gained confidence and told her mother that she was upholding the family's platform tradition.<sup>16</sup> Musical as well as theatrical, Margaret became bored with stifling protocol and provincialism and welcomed visits from her dear friend, the mercurial, impetuous, generous and entertaining Madame Melba. Through concerts at home and abroad, Melba raised substantial sums for the Red Cross and allied societies.

Lady Stanley wrote a moving letter to the people of Victoria in 1915 to gain support for her fund for sick and wounded Australian soldiers. In addition to approaching community leaders, she appealed to the workers of Victoria to organise 'subscriptions in every factory and workshop on behalf of their brothers in the ranks'.<sup>17</sup> A stirring concert given by Melba in July 1915 contributed £3,000 to a campaign that raised over £350,000 and financed several Red Cross projects until the end of the war. Margaret's second campaign, part of a fund-raising drive across Australia initiated by Lady Helen, produced funds for the British Red Cross Society, and her third featured a city carnival on Empire Day, 24 May 1918, and a striking procession by women VADs. This campaign also marked the introduction of Red Cross house badges for sale, an idea borrowed from the United States. It was hoped that display of the large badges would prompt other households to join the society. A *Table Talk* photographer captured Lady Helen fixing a house badge to Federal Government House and Lady Stanley attaching one to Stonnington.<sup>18</sup>

The Australian Red Cross was essentially a women's organisation but the apparent rigid gender stereotyping at the ground level suggested by women knitting and men confined to carpentry tends to blur on closer inspection. Many of the women office bearers in branches were not confined to the domestic sphere but came from positions of community leadership. The Lilydale branch under the presidency of Madame Melba recorded co-operation between women and men in entertaining wounded soldiers from local hospitals and in all patriotic endeavours.

This kind of co-operation may have been widespread. Women and men shared many of the key positions in the higher echelons, and, overseas, all of the commissioners and searchers were men. Certainly men did not fill all the difficult positions, as has sometimes been asserted, nor on the whole were men of influence wheeled out on special fund-raising occasions to bolster public confidence, as historian Richard Selleck facetiously suggested in discussion of the Australian Comforts Fund. However, it must be admitted that Lady Stanley did precisely that—wheeled out influential men—when organising her 1915 appeal. She enlarged her fund-raising committee to include such 'prominent individuals' as W.L. Baillieu, E. Norton Grimwade and Herbert Brookes.<sup>19</sup>

Based at Federal Government House, the Red Cross provided invaluable opportunities for middle-class women to contribute to the war effort, albeit in a volunteer capacity. The Australian government employed only nurses and failed to establish auxiliary defence programs such as existed during the Second World War. If Defence Department staff were serious about preventing meaningful participation by women, they should have scrutinised the Red Cross for possible subversive tendencies. The Red Cross attracted many women who did not resile from responsibility but actively sought it. These women largely flew under the radar and, until recent decades, did not attract the attention of feminist historians because they tended to be patriotic conservatives.

The outstanding Australian Red Cross international women leaders were volunteers from Victoria and they were not novices. They had learnt leadership from their schools, sometimes their mothers and definitely from their fathers, brothers or husbands. Eliza Mitchell, foundation convenor of the Home Hospitals Committee, Victoria, which worked closely with the central council, later managed the Hospitals Department in England and was the only woman to become an assistant commissioner. She was the daughter of Alexander Morrison, famous headmaster of Scotch College, and the wife of a prominent barrister. Mary Chomley, daughter of Judge Arthur Chomley of Dromkeen, Riddell's Creek, became foundation state secretary of the Victoria League before presiding over the Red Cross prisoner-of-war department. Vera Deakin, daughter of Alfred Deakin, Australia's second prime minister, and Pattie, a well-known community welfare leader, imbibed leadership with her mother's milk.



**Headquarters Depot, Federal Government House, Melbourne.** British Red Cross Society, Australian Branch, *Annual Report*, 1914-15. Courtesy of Australian Red Cross Archives

Lady Helen Munro Ferguson led the Red Cross from Federal Government House. Of high birth, elegant and bi-lingual, her second language being French, she supervised services at home and abroad by chairing the central council and finance committee, travelling widely in Australia with her husband, and writing prolifically to overseas commissioners with grace and meticulous attention to detail. Seemingly inexhaustible, she attended innumerable Red Cross functions in Victoria. Her formal manner, once called glacial, suggested aloofness but her friends knew of her warmth of character and support for welfare projects apart from Red Cross. She assisted bush nursing, kindergartens and infant welfare and often read to residents of a home for the blind.<sup>20</sup>

Lady Helen's genteel appearance masked a powerful will; according to Philadelphia Robertson, headquarters secretary, she was the guiding hand and controlling mind of the Australian Red Cross network. Lady Helen's friend, Lady Stanley, perceived that behind the composed public persona was a woman highly possessive of the society and subject to intense anxiety.<sup>21</sup> These traits worked in favour of the Red

Cross, causing Lady Helen to zealously protect its unblemished image against a background of invidious rumour-mongering. She confronted these rumours head on, knowing that if any took hold there would be a dramatic drop in community support.

In response to claims of mismanagement of Red Cross goods in Egypt in 1915, Lady Helen sought explanations from her commissioners, Adrian Knox and Norman Brookes; they rejected the accusations but conceded confusion had occurred partly owing to the use by some traders of the Red Cross symbol to attract business. This practice had since been stopped. A report by a committee chaired by Judge John Felix Kershaw and appointed by the British high commissioner in Egypt subsequently refuted all criticism.<sup>22</sup>

When Colonel Murdoch, the Red Cross chief commissioner in London, publicised his opinion that there was an oversupply of pyjamas and shirts in England and Egypt in 1917, Lady Helen rebuked him for causing a 'wave of depression' in Red Cross branches in Australia.<sup>23</sup> The oversupply proved temporary, as the German use of mustard gas increased the need for pyjamas.

Lady Helen invited hundreds of metropolitan and country branch representatives to Federal Government House on 28 and 29 August 1917 to refute pernicious rumours that the society was wasting money on highly paid staff and that moths, mice and rust were destroying foodstuffs in storage. She stressed that the society employed only ten paid staff, all on modest wages, and invited those present to inspect the facilities for safe food storage. The following year, Lady Helen countered criticism that Red Cross goods were being sold in England, explaining that they were damaged items salvaged from a sunken ship. She advised Colonel Murdoch that this should never happen again; the salvaged goods should be either retained or donated.<sup>24</sup>

While Lady Helen's micro-management style appeared to work in Victoria, it was less successful when she dealt with Colonel Murdoch, partly because the slowness of the mail, which took about six weeks or longer, caused misunderstandings. Colonel Murdoch resented Lady Helen's tendency to prejudice without hearing his side of a case, and he and his male colleagues deprecated her alleged lack of business sense. In fact, one of his male colleagues in Melbourne, William Frederick Greenwood, displayed blatant misogyny in comments such as 'so long as the women persist in trying to run the business end there will be too

much delay and waste'. The Naval Department's reduction of shipping space for Red Cross goods in 1917 prompted Greenwood to argue 'a couple of men could get as much again by putting matters before the brass hats, who really resent the attempted petticoat business engineered from H.Q.'<sup>25</sup>

When Colonel Murdoch, a self-made businessman from Scotland and owner of a flourishing menswear store in Sydney, advised that astute commercial practice rather than sentiment should inform Red Cross operations, Lady Helen retorted that indeed the Red Cross was based on sentiment but therein lay its great strength. All goals had been met; for three years, the Red Cross based at Federal Government House had provided adequate funds to the commissioners overseas and 'goods of excellent workmanship and in the greatest abundance'. On the domestic front, the Red Cross was running kitchens, convalescent homes, recreation rooms and hospitals, besides supplying hospitals all over Australia and all transports leaving Australia with every kind of Red Cross comfort. Finally, Colonel Murdoch recognised the difficulties on both sides and conceded: 'It is my misfortune that I have never met Your Excellency ... The best correspondence is most unsatisfactory and very often five minutes conversation would dispel the misunderstandings of a hundred letters.'<sup>26</sup>

During the Great War, the Australian Red Cross and its protagonists grew in stature. Once a humble offshoot of the British Red Cross Society, the new society emerged as a strong and distinctive organisation and proudly appeared as the Australian Red Cross Society on the cover of annual reports issued from Federal Government House. Some of its staff such as Philadelphia Robertson, Vera Deakin (White) and Lilian Whybrow (Scantlebury) would become leaders of the future. After the tumult of war subsided, differences of approach were forgotten and Lady Helen dwelt on the harmony that had prevailed; 'the Australian Red Cross', she asserted, 'has been as national an institution as the A.I.F. itself.'<sup>27</sup>

The advent of peace caused the Victorian Division to remark on the decline of Red Cross activities worldwide and become perplexed about future directions. Although no longer dealing with terrible daily casualty lists, the Division remained committed to convalescent and rehabilitation services. However, the Armistice had removed the great incentive for Red Cross work and some two hundred branches planned

to disband. Motivation was further weakened by the departure of the loved president, Lady Stanley, for England in March 1919. So strong was her longing for home that she sailed with her children, leaving her husband behind; he continued official duties for a few more months. The Victorian Division extolled Lady Helen; she had inaugurated the society and through singular dedication had 'carried it to a high pitch of perfection.'<sup>28</sup>

At Federal Government House, in the best tradition of leadership, Lady Helen rejected negativity. The 'great mission' of the society had been accomplished and an organisation created that was ready to relieve suffering in time of war or peace. Women from all parts of Australia and all spheres of life had been drawn together, and the spirit of unity and comradeship that had evolved among them would surely endure long after the close of Red Cross war activities of 1914–19.<sup>29</sup>

The influenza epidemic immediately after the war 'greatly increased' calls on the Red Cross in the short term for comforts, equipment and stores. In her final annual report in 1920, Lady Helen demonstrated the continuing demand for Red Cross services. She commented that Red Cross work overseas had been completely wound up and part of the surplus stock valued at £72,000 had been presented 'to the Poles and other suffering populations in the devastated districts of Europe'. On the other hand, work in Australia was expanding in the form of new convalescent homes and various rehabilitation schemes to assist disabled soldiers. The post-war period was a time for memorials and Lionel Lindsay designed a certificate to honour the 'devoted service' of Red Cross members; nearly 68,500 had been distributed by 1920. Bearing Lady Helen's signature, these certificates are a poignant reminder of her own dedicated service and beneficent leadership.<sup>30</sup>

Lady Helen had presided over a great humanitarian organisation from Federal Government House and she herself would continue to represent it in the forums of the League of Red Cross Societies long after her return to England. This remarkable woman scores only a few sentences in her husband's long entry by J.R. Poynter in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* but the entry notes that Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson believed that his wife, Lady Helen, 'had more of the qualities needed to lead the Empire in war than Asquith.'<sup>31</sup> Her strong attachment to Australia was reflected in the sadness of her departure in 1920. It was no time for congratulations, Lady Helen lamented at her farewell at

Federal Government House, but rather a time for condolences. During these six years in Australia, she declared ‘your land has been my land and your people my people.’<sup>32</sup>

The Australian Red Cross left Federal Government House in 1921 but the society’s headquarters has remained in Melbourne until this day. While at Federal Government House, Lady Helen Munro Ferguson and her central council shaped the society’s federal structure, supplemented supplies and medical equipment to hospitals, nurtured hospital visiting, developed convalescent and rehabilitation services, and supported the Australian Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau, which morphed into the important tracing agency. The society’s firm foundations built at Federal Government House provided the springboard for multiple invaluable projects such as the Blood Service of later years.

On 13 August 2014, the Red Cross celebrated its centenary and honoured individual branches that had continued to function since the Great War. Descendants of those present at the foundation meeting were among the hundreds of invited guests. The celebration occurred in the great ballroom at Government House, once known as Federal Government House.

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## The Band has Rendered Valuable Service Victorian Brass Bands on the Home Front during the Great War

*Jillian Durance*

### **Abstract**

*The brass band movement, imported from the British military tradition, soon flourished in the colony of Victoria, taking varied forms. Therefore, when war broke out and the band movement was ready to respond to the needs of recruiting and fundraising, as well as farewelling and welcoming home of the troops. This article reveals that bands and their members played a key role in term and morale on the home front and experienced difficult times in the process.*

### **The Status of Brass Bands at the Time of the Great War**

By the outbreak of the Great War in 1914, brass bands had been part of the Victorian cultural landscape for well over half a century. In the early twentieth century, brass bands existed throughout the state. They thrived in the urban areas of Melbourne, including Northcote, Collingwood, Richmond, Fitzroy, Footscray and Essendon, as well as the outlying districts of Diamond Creek and Lilydale. There were several brass bands in the regional centres of Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong, and in other major rural towns such as Colac in the Western District, and Traralgon, Warragul and Bairnsdale in Gippsland. Even very small rural districts could boast a brass band, for example, Wandilogong, near Bright and the distant towns of Horsham, Natimuk, Dimboola and Coromby on the Wimmera plains.<sup>1</sup>

At first imported, brass bands soon developed in Victoria in different local contexts. The brass band as it was known in the pre-war era had largely derived 'from the military band, which is a combination of reed and brass instruments'.<sup>2</sup> Military bands belonging to British regiments were the first bands to be established in the early days of settlement in Victoria. However, a local brass band movement soon evolved from that tradition and gained momentum during and after the gold rushes of the mid-19th century. There were circus bands, and bands belonging to churches, temperance and friendly societies. While

bands were not only a popular form of public music-making, they were also an acceptable recreational pastime for young men.<sup>3</sup> This led to the formation of bands that were supported by work places, for example, the Phoenix Foundry Band in Ballarat and the bands of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade in Melbourne and the Malvern Tramways.<sup>4</sup> From the 1880s, there were also a number of Salvation Army bands,<sup>5</sup> as well as a couple of church orphanage bands, including St Augustine's in Geelong, where young boys were trained in music as well as farming and gardening.<sup>6</sup> In 1911, with the coming of 'compulsory military training' for young men and the building of drill halls, there were numerous young boys training in cadet bands, composed mainly of bugles, fifes and drums.<sup>7</sup>

Added to this already complex picture were the private bands created in the early days of Victoria. Some of these then evolved into town bands like Bulch's Model Brass Band, which later became the Ballarat City Band.<sup>8</sup> These civilian bands co-existed with the regimental, cadet and garrison bands and some bandsmen often belonged to several bands. Civilian bands, despite their often quasi-military trappings of uniforms, discipline and marching drills were quite separate entities, and evolved their own identities and influence within their local sphere.<sup>9</sup>

The rural district, country town and Melbourne bands, which varied in size, were independent bodies run by committee members who determined the roles of the bands and raised the necessary funds for their needs. Instruments were generally purchased by the bands and, though initially expensive, they could last several generations of players.<sup>10</sup> Bands were often given assistance by local councils, which encouraged their activities and saw them as beneficial to the cultural and social life of their districts.<sup>11</sup> Some bands played in competitions, including, after its commencement in 1900, the South Street Band Contest at Ballarat. While some bands were unable to participate, owing to the distances they needed to travel and the level of commitment required to compete successfully, the competitions served to standardise band structure and selection of music. While the number of Victorian bands, both civilian and military at the time of the Great War would be difficult to enumerate, the presence of 'a well turned out (all brass-or mostly brass) band became emblematic of a progressive, proud and socially cohesive community.'<sup>12</sup> Many people would have agreed that 'a town without a band was a town without a soul.'<sup>13</sup>

Few public occasions at this time were 'without a brass band in attendance', as brass bands added 'solemnity and dignity' to civic occasions, such as the laying of foundation stones or the opening of railway lines.<sup>14</sup> They added colour and a 'festive air' to sporting fixtures, race meetings, regattas, garden parties and picnics, including Sunday school outings and trade union gatherings. Bands were an integral part of the annual rituals accompanying the trade unions' celebration of the Eight Hour Day.<sup>15</sup> Brass bands played at fundraising concerts and events for various organisations and charities, particularly for the Hospital Sunday movement.<sup>16</sup> They also accompanied the local rural fire brigades to demonstrations, and often their players had to audition in order to prove that they were good enough to represent their town. The activities in which they engaged were influenced by the traditions and 'fads' of their own particular communities, for example, the athletics carnivals and skating in Stawell, or Friday late night shopping in Puckle Street, Moonee Ponds.<sup>17</sup> Many of these activities continued throughout the war with the support of their local bands.

Performing in a band became a way of life, requiring the discipline of learning the instrument, a commitment to regular band practice and a willingness to 'turn out' to numerous engagements, both paid and unpaid. The bandsmen gained experience in performing before an audience—often in an outdoor setting without any amplification! They were also trained to play a familiar repertoire, encompassing popular songs, marches, hymns, and pieces from the classics, opera and waltzes.<sup>18</sup> The selections were determined by public taste, the requirements of competitions, and the availability of sheet music, although local bandmasters were skilled at transposing music for the various instruments. The bandmaster could also teach learners many of the instruments that formed the basis of the band.<sup>19</sup>

Those bandsmen who enlisted thus took with them a familiar repertoire of music and a set of musical skills that transferred easily into the military band tradition. Almost all bandsmen, as well as many bandmasters, considered themselves as amateur rather than professional musicians. Rochester's young bandmaster, Stephen Haisman gave his occupation as 'printer', while the Northcote's accomplished musician Thomas Bulch was a 'dredgehand'.<sup>20</sup> Both became battalion bandmasters on the Western Front.<sup>21</sup>

Often bandsmen began their musical training at an early age and, by the time they enlisted, were quite accomplished on their instrument. Eighteen-year-old Ray Membrey, who enlisted in 1915, had already had six years of experience playing the trombone with the Stawell Brass Band.<sup>22</sup> Les Vosti of the Essendon City Council Band had learned to play euphonium as a boy in the Guildford Band under the guidance of his uncle, while Stephen and William Haisman of Rochester were playing cornet from an early age.<sup>23</sup> These bandsmen were also accustomed to wearing uniforms and had experience in playing while marching, particularly if they had participated in processions and band contests. The training, discipline and experiences of the civilian bandsmen enabled them to adapt readily to camp life and to the battalion bands in which they commonly volunteered.<sup>24</sup> The military origins of many aspects of brass banding meant that the bandsmen of the 1st AIF were in fact 'enfolded' back into a long British tradition where musicians aroused patriotic fervour, bolstered morale, and provided comfort to the troops for whom they played.

With the coming of war, the brass bands continued performing in many public roles at home where they were established in individual settings, but they also adapted their activities to the requirements of the war effort. Their assistance in fundraising efforts increased, while they were very much in demand for a new layer of duties. These new duties included playing for farewell functions for soldiers enlisting, musical send-offs at railway stations and raising funds for the war effort. They were also called on to enhance the 'patriotic' flavour of sporting events, to assist in recruiting drives, and, later, to celebrate the coming of peace, and to welcome home returning soldiers. They would also play a special role in commemorating those who did not return.

### **Send-offs and Farewells**

Within days of the war being declared on 5 August 1914—the day Australians received the news—men from all over Victoria began to enlist. The brass bands swung into action in support and acknowledgement of their decision, which they saw as an act of duty and patriotism. Over the course of the war, the send-offs to soldiers took a variety of forms including processions and station farewells, public functions or the more private farewells, especially for those men belonging to the local bands.

One of the first of many new functions taken on by the local rural and municipal bands was the farewell of soldiers who were going into the training camps of the Australian Expeditionary Force at Royal Park and Broadmeadows in outer Melbourne. On the Friday morning of 21 August, in the Victorian rural city of Traralgon, local troops of the 48<sup>th</sup> Infantry left for Melbourne. 'They paraded at their barracks in Seymour St and headed by the Town Band marched to the railway station, where they were bidden good luck by several speakers, after which they entrained and left for camp.'<sup>25</sup> Two weeks later, in northern Victoria, the Rochester Brass Band was engaged to play at a 'monster patriotic meeting' at the shire hall 'to bid farewell to Rochester's contingent of volunteers'. In the evening, the band 'marched from the post office to the hall, followed by the military.'<sup>26</sup> Among those leaving for the war were the soldiers from the Rochester troop of the Light Horse, many of whom, like the Traralgon contingent, were amongst the Australian troops at the Gallipoli landing of 25 April 1915.

Similar scenes were repeated all over Victoria. First, there was a farewell to existing military units, followed by send-offs to the earliest rush of volunteers among the civilian population. In many country towns, the railway station was the place of departure for new recruits and the bands began turning out to make memorable musical presentations to complement the official speeches. However, the bands soon began to lose some of their own experienced musicians. Although approving of the decision of these men to enlist, remaining band members were reluctant to lose key players. Each instrument had a special place in the band's line-up and it was not always easy to find a replacement to play the relinquished instrument.

Bands often held private farewells for their own members where their special service and contribution to the band was acknowledged. Those going on active service were presented with gifts such as fountain pens, wallets, 'wristlet watches' and pipes. They were 'toasted' along with 'The King', and all shared the 'solid and liquid refreshments of excellent quality', while they listened to speeches that were warm in their praise of the decision to enlist, but also tinged with the sadness of 'a heavy heart'. At the same time the recruits carried away with them words that reflected 'the esteem and respect of their comrades, who had at all times proved themselves to be good bandsmen.'<sup>27</sup>

Brass bands also played at soldiers' farewells in public halls and meeting places throughout the state. Sometimes these functions doubled as fundraising events. On Saturday 10 July 1915, the Diamond Creek Brass Band played at a concert run by the Diamond Creek Red Cross Society. The band opened the evening with a rousing rendition of 'Australia Will Be There'. The event included a lecture by John Brooks on his experiences of the Boer War, and a display of goods handmade for the war effort, including flannel shirts, 26 pairs of socks, and cholera belts.<sup>28</sup> The fundraiser also served as a farewell for three Diamond Creek lads, including Herbert Alfred Godber, the author's grandfather.<sup>29</sup>

These farewells to soldiers continued throughout the war, especially after the news of the Gallipoli landing on 25 April 1915, which, together with the subsequent battles, produced a spike in the number of recruits.<sup>30</sup> Sometimes these events followed hard upon sad news from the front or, just as poignantly, the return of wounded soldiers from overseas, often to the same railway station from which they had been farewelled only a year or so earlier.

### Fundraising

While the brass bands continued to perform at social and cultural public events in their districts, they were now also called upon to play for fundraising functions focused on the war effort. The bands supported many patriotic gatherings. These included sports meetings, fairs, fetes, bazaars and carnivals, where donations were sought for the Red Cross or other war comforts funds. Their commitment is evident in the minutes of their meetings, and widely acknowledged in the local press.

Fundraising for the war effort began early in Traralgon. On 12 November 1914, at the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Show, five special trains were chartered to bring people from distant towns. Throughout the day, the crowds were serenaded by the band. The takings were £168 18s (equivalent to half a year's minimum wage for a labourer) and the money raised was donated to the Red Cross 'comforts fund' for the soldiers.<sup>31</sup> By the end of 1915, the Horsham Borough Brass Band reported that its players had 'assisted gratuitously' at many 'patriotic and benefit entertainments' including the 'Belgian fete'; Mrs Richard's benefit; Mrs Lawson's benefit; recruiting meetings; the Women's Organising Committee sale and a fancy dress football match. These events were in addition to providing musical items at football matches, church parades and local theatrical performances for which the band charged their

usual 'play out' fee.<sup>32</sup> This pattern of regular 'play outs', in addition to performances at the extra 'patriotic' events, was repeated throughout the war years. A frequent feature of the latter was the band's willingness to forgo payment in order to augment the funds raised at each such event.

On occasion, even church parades became a source of fundraising. For example, in May 1916, the Diamond Creek Brass Band provided the music for a patriotic church service held at St. John's Church of England. The service began with the favourite song of the war years, 'Onward Christian Soldiers'. The congregation, accompanied by the band, sang 'God Save the King'. During the offertory, the organ combined with a cornet solo to play the moving hymn 'Abide with Me'. The recessional hymn was 'God of our Fathers, Known of Old', the stirring anthem set to Rudyard Kipling's words. At this service, worshippers and the band contributed to the fundraising and half of the £6 collection, almost a week's minimum wage, was donated toward the tent fund for the training camps.<sup>33</sup> The presence of the band as well as the selection of hymns clearly enhanced the patriotic nature of the event.

In many events, especially the larger patriotic entertainments, the brass bands teamed up with other local groups, performers, visiting artists and guest speakers, both amateur and professional, all of whom were willing to give of their time and talents to support the causes initiated by the necessities of a nation at war. In May 1915, Australian-born soprano Amy Castles gave a concert in the Melbourne Town Hall, assisted by the combined Philharmonic and Zelman orchestras and a choir of 300 voices to raise money for sick and wounded soldiers.<sup>34</sup> The renowned Amy Castles, Victoria's orchestras and choirs, as well as the lesser known and unsung local brass bands, all responded to the patriotic impulse to perform for the nation's war effort.

### The Role of the Bands in Recruitment

Rousing marches and patriotic tunes heightened the 'call to arms'. Throughout Victoria, all kinds of bands participated in the recruiting process, including country district and municipal bands, cadet bands, training camp bands and bands attached to the military districts, such as the Fifth Cavalry Band in the Echuca district.<sup>35</sup> In March and again in May 1916, the Rochester Band played at local recruiting rallies. The band played 'a number of patriotic airs' in front of the hall before the meeting opened and then led the singing of the National Anthem, 'God Save the King', at the opening of proceedings. Their presence, and the



**21st Battalion Band, photographed in France, 1918.** By 1918, the band had seen many changes of personnel due to death, injury, illness and bandsmen going on leave. The instruments they played stayed with the band. Many bandsmen learned to play their instruments in local country and town bands before their enlistment. William Haisman, (back row, 4th from right) played cornet from an early age with the Rochester Brass Band. Herbert Godber (2nd row, 2nd from left), played B flat bass in the Showgrounds Camp Band before joining the 21st Battalion Band overseas. (Author's family collection)

music played, lent colour and formality to this 'most serious affair'. James Mathews, Labor MHR for Melbourne Ports, exhorted everyone to encourage the enlistment of all those who were able to serve and 'do their duty at the front if success was to be assured'.<sup>36</sup>

During the months of April, May and June 1916, the Victorian State Parliamentary Recruiting Committee decided to augment the efforts of local recruiters by conducting a 'recruiting campaign by special train' throughout the many country areas served by the extensive railway network radiating out from Melbourne. The idea was to gather up any of the 'eligibles' who had not yet enlisted. Although the emphasis was on volunteering, conscription was never far from the rhetoric used on these occasions. On the various rail trips, the official party, including Sir Alexander Peacock, other parliamentarians and recruiting officers, were invariably accompanied by a military band, such as the Royal Park Camp Band. The band played at each station stopover, often leading a march to a town meeting, where the local recruiting committee

organised a reception hosted by the shire president or local member of the Legislative Assembly.<sup>37</sup> On occasion, the town's brass band or cadet band was also invited to meet the train.

Large crowds turned up at the country stations in all weathers to hear the bands and listen to the speeches. 'Eligibles' were often conspicuous by their absence. School children sang 'God Save the King', often adding a second verse, 'God Save Our Splendid Men', but the recruiters generally went away disappointed. In June 1916, the recruitment train travelled through Gippsland stopping first at Korumburra, where young members of the local cadet band met the train. It seems no one enlisted, so after a very short stop, the train steamed off to Leongatha. The Korumburra ladies had prepared refreshments, but as the dignitaries had left before they could be served, the refreshments were offered to the cadet bandsmen who eagerly devoured them.<sup>38</sup>

The recruitment train had some successes among band members, who were in the front line of these events. At Rochester in northern Victoria, three more members of the Rochester band enlisted after the train's visit, including its newly appointed young conductor Stephen Haisman, George Clayton, and eighteen-year-old draper Robert Whitla. Their resignations were 'received with regret'. At the farewell for these three recruits in September 1916, it was acknowledged that the band 'was losing some its best bandsmen'.<sup>39</sup> The band committee chairman, Mr J. Armstrong, said that that he was 'proud of the fine spirit that had prompted our boys to respond to the call to arms', although 'the band suffered thereby'. The Rochester Band had 'contributed nobly to the service of their King and Country'. The men were given a special send off by 'a large gathering of friends at the local railway station' on 26 September 1916, with the band, of course, in attendance.

### The Effect of the War on Band Membership and Activities

The war placed demands on the bands' financial resources. They had to compete for a part of the already stretched public funds and often waived their 'play out' fees in order to increase the amount of patriotic funds collected for each event. This financial pressure coincided with an inevitable decline in membership, in the face of the ongoing departure of players, office-bearers and bandmasters. This was a considerable impost on each band, the numbers enlisting averaging around a dozen—as much as half of the band's usual complement. The Traralgon Band, with

an initial strength of twenty in 1914, lost thirteen of its members to the war effort.<sup>40</sup> An honour roll compiled by the Ballarat City Band listed twenty members who had volunteered.<sup>41</sup> In July 1916, with many of their eligible players at the front or in training camps, the Rochester Band committee decreed that 'a roll of honor in connection with the band should be established, [and that] the names of the bandsmen who had enlisted be exhibited in the band room.'<sup>42</sup> Two state-wide 'honor rolls' of affiliated bandsmen were also published in the 26 September and 26 November 1915 editions of the *Australian Band News*, highlighting the losses to country bands in particular. Dimboola and Bairnsdale bands both named sixteen recruits from their members.<sup>43</sup>

On Bairnsdale's list of bandsmen was James Prendergast, who became an original member of the 6th Battalion Band. In a letter written from Egypt in early 1916, Prendergast reflected: 'the war must affect the bands a lot [judging] by the number of bandsmen over here, but their places will be filled by learners, so in time the young members will take the places of the old ones who fell doing their bit in this strenuous struggle.'<sup>44</sup> Prendergast was right in his prediction. By September 1915, of those sixteen who had enlisted, two had been killed on the Gallipoli Peninsula and one wounded. Back in Bairnsdale during July 1915, eleven young boys who had just left school and had been in the school's band, now took the 'places of the old ones who fell'. Their action increased the town band's membership from 18 to 29.<sup>45</sup>

The inclusion of younger boys in the bands was common throughout the state. Age had rarely been a barrier to band membership. Often the younger players came from a 'juvenile' band. In Maryborough, with the Citizen's Band suffering from enlistments during the war, recruitment of younger players meant that 'a band of thirty-five has come into being'. Mr Quinn, their conductor, claimed that they could play 'alright' and that 'were it not for the boys', he would not have a band at all.<sup>46</sup> A number of bands, including Rochester and Dimboola, were only kept going with the recruitment of younger players. The Horsham Borough Band was similarly able to fill the places of its fifteen members who had enlisted, with recruits from the junior band.<sup>47</sup> However, as there was less emphasis on performing in competitions during the war years, the initial inexperience of these junior members was not seen as a liability to the overall success of the band.

In spite of the wartime difficulties, a number of bands continued to function well with regular meetings and 'play outs', and with support from their shire councils as well as the general public. For example, the Ballarat City Band, with its annual subsidy from the city council, continued to give municipal concerts as well as play at patriotic and charity functions. Even though, by 1917, it had lost twenty of its members to war service, it managed to participate in local competitions. By war's end, the band still had 28 players.<sup>48</sup> Even smaller bands in sparsely-populated rural communities could function with a town's support and their own determination. But with the loss of friends, family and acquaintances in such tightly-knit groups as the bands needed to be, the war also exacted a personal toll on the continuing members.

Members of the Rochester band had enlisted steadily from the earliest days of the war. By early November 1916, when all who could volunteer for overseas service, had done so, the Rochester Band learned that their 'former well known secretary' and leading bandsman, Fred Ferguson, had died of wounds in France.<sup>49</sup> He had been 'one of the town's most popular and promising young men'. On 19 December 1916, only a few weeks after another railway station farewell at Rochester, news came that Private Edwin Godden had been killed in action in France. The *Rochester Express* recorded that this soldier:

had enlisted in 1915 and left Rochester for the front twelve months ago, and he and his comrades were given a send-off by the Rochester Band. Amongst those in procession to the railway station on that occasion were Chas. King (since killed in action) and Robert Ferguson (since wounded) as well as many other boys of the band who are now either at or near the front.<sup>50</sup>

Despite the losses of these bandsmen, the Rochester Band committee continued to hold regular meetings and agreed to the many requests received for their services. At the annual general meetings, the financial minutes recorded that their balance 'under the circumstances was very satisfactory' and, even if 'the credit balance was small, they were lucky to be out of debt'. The chairman in March 1917 declared 'that the list of players was about the lowest since the band began etc. The players were doing well just now and the outlook was bright.'<sup>51</sup> The Rochester Band continued to donate their services to local fundraising functions and celebrations. On 24 May 1917, Empire Day, the band headed a

procession 'playing patriotic airs', leading the schoolchildren and various mobile displays.<sup>52</sup> Even in October 1917, with all of their eligible young players at the war, and the committee down to a handful, the band's services were given at the Red Cross races the following Wednesday, at a school bazaar the day after, and a concert for returned soldiers on the following Friday night.<sup>53</sup> The editorial comment in the *Rochester Express* on 9 August 1918 summed up the band's position and echoed many such sentiments across the state:

The advent of the present war has depleted the band of a number of its prominent players ... but it still carries on creditably in the circumstances, and its inspiring airs are a distinctive feature to our town. Moreover, the band has rendered valuable service to our many charitable and patriotic movements. Long may it continue to do so, and may it soon be reinforced by the return of its members from the front, with their honours thick upon them.<sup>54</sup>

While many bands, including those at Ballarat, Horsham and Rochester, were able to perform important public functions throughout the war, others struggled to maintain membership and financial viability. Colac kept going in spite of the fact that by 1916, its 'sources of income have all but disappeared'.<sup>55</sup> Many band meetings' minutes comment that the times were 'arduous' or that they were 'quiet', while other bands seem to be absent for extended periods, judging by their own minute books and the public record, especially during 1918. Several bands that fared less well went into recess for varying periods. For example, the Lilydale Band was still playing at patriotic functions in 1915, but then suffered 'a temporary demise', owing to a dearth of funds. By February 1918, however, it had re-formed and 'played at various welcome homes for returning soldiers'.<sup>56</sup> The activities of the Traralgon Band also suffered during 1918, but revived with a new bandmaster appointed in November.<sup>57</sup>

Many of the civilian brass bands, particularly those in the country, were adversely affected by the loss of at least half of their complement of players. However, those which recruited younger players, sustained the financial and moral support of their district, preserved the unity of their organisation, and maintained their useful role as entertainers, 'morale boosters' and fundraisers. The public face of the bands was one of duty, and carrying on 'business as usual'. Those that had struggled or were in

recess revived their fortunes at war's end. Thus, with the signing of the Armistice on 11 November 1918, many were able to muster players to join in the numerous peace celebrations across the state.

### Peace Celebrations

The peace celebrations throughout Victoria were both impromptu and planned. Some took the form of spontaneous gatherings at town halls and in main streets. Then, in the days following the Armistice, the bands assisted in organised civic processions, pageants, concerts and carnivals. On 13 November 1918, 21 members of the Essendon City Council Brass Band 'played outside the [town] hall then inside played an overture of national anthems. A splendid program was given by well-known artists'.<sup>58</sup> The following Sunday, 17 November, was proclaimed 'Thanksgiving Day', with bands leading the singing in church services that were often outdoors and inter denominational.<sup>59</sup> The bands assumed a special role in each public celebration.

In Ballarat, the City Band assembled at the city hall and, with the traffic stopped and the Alfred (Town Hall) Bells pealing, the bandsmen played 'God Save the King' while the crowd sang. Later, a giant procession formed behind the City Band as it marched from Ballarat



**Peace Procession, Firebrace St. Horsham, Victoria.** The bandsmen of the Horsham Borough Band head a procession of returned soldiers, members of the local district battalion, the cadet unit and the boy scouts. Children also join in as a public holiday has been declared, 11 November 1918. Courtesy Horsham and District Historical Society

East with the fire brigade and then, joining with Prout's Band, led a large crowd of people in from the west. The bands played the 'Marseillaise', the stirring 'Rule Britannia', 'God Save the King' and the hymns 'Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow' and 'Peace Perfect Peace'.<sup>60</sup> It was a similar scene in Horsham, where massed brass bands assembled from all the smaller towns in the locality and marched down Firebrace Street. The bandsmen headed a procession of returned soldiers, members of the local district battalion, the cadet unit and the boy scouts. Children also joined in as a public holiday had been declared.<sup>61</sup>

It was a more colourful scene at Traralgon, where the 'newly-organised Town Band under the leadership of Mr. L. Crowe, made its first appearance at the head of the procession and acquitted itself admirably'. The procession included the fire brigade in uniform, ladies from the Australian Comforts Funds in motorcars, and several other decorated cars, one of which held portraits of King George and Queen Mary. Many people wore fancy dress representing 'John Bull' and 'Britannia' and other iconic figures of the Empire. There was also an effigy of the Kaiser Wilhelm with a hangman's noose around his neck. 'The procession marched along Franklin Street followed by a huge concourse of people to the Mechanics Hall where the band played several selections outside the building.'<sup>62</sup>

In the peace ceremonies everywhere, the bands provided the proceedings with a structure, especially in the marches. There was a real sense of celebration and patriotic feeling in the music they played, music that was by now very familiar to the crowds participating. They had heard these tunes and anthems during the send-offs and farewells, in churches, halls and on street corners, and now they would hear them again in the welcome home ceremonies.

### Welcome Home

Many soldiers arrived home before the end of the war, and bands were often there to welcome them back. But the trickle would soon turn into a flood. The Traralgon Band tried valiantly to keep up with the flow of men (and two nurses) returning and, though not able to meet every single one, they managed 57 'welcome homes'.<sup>63</sup> In the first months of 1919, the Colac Town Band would meet soldiers at the railway station and escort them to the shire hall for a welcome home. They soon discovered, however, that sometimes there were so many soldiers

arriving at different times and occasions, that it was impossible to meet them all at the station.<sup>64</sup>

Similar welcomes were witnessed all over the state. In Rochester throughout 1918 and 1919, many soldiers were welcomed home as soon as they stepped off the train. Lance Corporal James Scott of Rochester East was one of the first home, being an 'original Anzac'. When he arrived in November 1918, the Rochester Band played 'patriotic airs' on the approach of the train and during its stay. There were three cheers, speeches, and the pinning of an Anzac badge upon the breast of the returned man, who had unfortunately lost one of his legs. Then he was led to a reception in Mrs Moyle's refreshment rooms.<sup>65</sup> On such occasions, the band's presence underpinned the public recognition of the soldier's service, while the private reunion with family and friends sometimes had to come later. Over time, many of the bands welcomed back some of their own old bandsmen who, in turn, played at the welcome homes for more returning friends.

As well as being greeted with a band reception at the station, soldiers and bandsmen alike were given an official welcome home. Bairnsdale's James Prendergast, who had survived the Gallipoli campaign and the Western Front and had become the bandmaster of his own 6th Battalion Band, was given a 'splendid reception'. It was catered for by the Red Cross ladies and chaired by the president of the Bairnsdale Shire whose 'kind sentiments' were drowned out 'owing to the din of the band'.<sup>66</sup> The event highlights the enthusiasm with which former bandsmen were welcomed back.

A similar enthusiasm was demonstrated at the homecoming of Les Vosti, the son of John Vosti, bandsman and treasurer of the Essendon City Council Band. Les, also a member of that band, joined the Third Pioneer Band abroad and arrived back in Australia in June 1919. Les was given a public welcome at the Essendon Town Hall where 'a good muster' of the band attended. But because the Vostis had originally come from Guildford in rural Victoria, near Castlemaine, the district wanted to give Les their own token of welcome and affection. Some of Les' family—his mother, sister and brother—left Melbourne on the evening express and alighted at Guildford at 8.14 p.m. The bells of the Presbyterian Church heralded the train's arrival. A crowd gathered at the station along with the Guildford Band, which was 'full of friends and family of the Vostis'.<sup>67</sup>

As the passengers alighted, the band played 'Home Sweet Home'. Unfortunately, the Vosti family was unaware that Les had missed the train at Spencer Street. Two hours later, Private Vosti and his mate Pete Skehan arrived at Guildford Station in a motorcar, having been collected from the next train, which stopped only at Castlemaine. Although by this time, 'the cold bleak wind had damped the spirits of some of the gathering and driven them home', Les Vosti received a hearty welcome, the band playing 'Home Sweet Home' for the second time, followed by 'See the Conquering Hero Comes', 'For He's a Jolly Good Fellow' and 'God Save The King'. This occasion, as well as the way in which it was reported, reveals a great deal about the dedication of the bands and how they saw their role in the years of the Great War.<sup>68</sup>

Not all returning soldiers, of course, had a musical welcome home. Even in places where there was still an active band, it was not always possible for the bandsmen to turn out. It may be, as the Traralgon and Colac bands reported, that the numbers of returning soldiers overwhelmed their resources. Perhaps some soldiers preferred to come home quietly.

#### **After the War: Restoration and Commemoration**

Among those welcomed home were surviving bandsmen. Some of these men rejoined their former bands, whose members were keen to have them back. Robert Whitla, together with William and Stephen Haisman, returned to Rochester and its band, and helped to train another generation of musicians, including Bill Haisman's own son, Brian.<sup>69</sup> Bandsmen continued the tradition by joining other bands when work opportunities took them elsewhere. Alfred Rowell, who formed the Soldiers Memorial Band in Ballarat, and James Prendergast of Bairnsdale, became leaders of other bands around the state.<sup>70</sup> Even some of those bandsmen who were disabled were drawn back into the band fold. Having lost his ability to play the trombone owing to the amputation of his badly wounded 'slide arm', Ray Membrey proceeded to play euphonium in the Richmond City Band.<sup>71</sup> The bands that survived the war would provide a 'home base' for those returning bandsmen who wanted to play on.

Those bandsmen who had perished overseas were later commemorated as soldiers on public memorials all around the country. But, even before the end of the war, some were 'remembered' by their bands at home, either through an honour roll as in Rochester and

Ballarat, or through an individual memorial such as that organised for Reg Meredith of Mildura. A stretcher bearer and member of his battalion band, Reg was killed at the Battle of Ploegstreet Wood in Belgium. His band sergeant wrote that he was 'a great loss to us as a comrade and a bandsman.'<sup>72</sup> Reg's band organised for a wooden bandstand to be built in the centre of their band rotunda, with a brass tablet inscribed with the words: 'Erected by the Mildura Band in memory of Pte. R. Meredith 38th Battalion. Killed on 28th May 1917.'<sup>73</sup> This memorial was planned and put into place well before the end of the war. Other memorials to soldiers took the form of band rotundas, the best known being the structure in the Edinburgh Gardens in North Fitzroy, with others at Port Melbourne and Yackandandah.<sup>74</sup> Memorialisation at home was yet another role the brass bands performed, both during and after the war. Their presence was integral to the many Anzac Day commemorations that began to evolve from the first anniversary of the Gallipoli landing.

Today brass bands still perform this traditional role at Anzac Day marches and other commemorative occasions. Despite fluctuations in their fortunes, many of those bands that contributed to the war effort a hundred years ago are still performing an important role in their communities.<sup>75</sup> Among them are the Warragul, Wonthaggi and Traralgon bands in Gippsland; Horsham and Nhill, Dimboola and Coromby in the Wimmera; the Colac Concert Band; and the City of Ballarat Band, along with the Diamond Valley Brass Band, and the Moonee Valley Brass.<sup>76</sup>

The bands and their members played a significant role on both the war and home fronts. In a letter from England in 1917, Rochester's Robert Ferguson claimed that: 'several other local lads, who graduated in the local seat of learning, the Rochester Brass Band are also in evidence, when not in the trenches.'<sup>77</sup> The Rochester Band, along with others, had made a contribution in training talented and enthusiastic bandsmen for the front as well as at home. Both civilian and battalion brass bands served as morale boosters in both theatres of the war effort and provided opportunities for recreation and entertainment. The bands gave a sense of identity, a sense of belonging and direction, and an occupation to many communities. They played music from a common and familiar repertoire that moved, inspired or consoled those who heard it.

While many bandsmen were lost forever, those players who returned and rejoined their old bands or created new ones, acquired an

excellent standard that nurtured the survival of brass bands well into the postwar period. Although the bands on the home front during the Great War undoubtedly suffered temporary or permanent loss of their players, many, but not all, went on with their usual activities as well as taking on new ones. The band culture that had been established in the period before the war ensured that the bands in many places had a focus and a purpose in keeping on under difficult circumstances. They had an important role to play in their town, rural and municipal districts and their efforts were appreciated and even extolled in the press. The legacy of their activities during the Great War is still evident in the roles these bands fulfil today.

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- 7 Whiteoak, p. 299.
- 8 Pattie, p. 8.
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## Class or Nation? Worker Loyalties in Melbourne during The Great War

*John Lack*

### Abstract

*This case study in social protest examines the violence that accompanied one of the demonstrations for cheaper food in Melbourne in August 1917. The article argues that the attacks on business premises, notably in the motor trades and rubber industry, originated in pre-war tensions between workers and employers, made worse by wartime unemployment, inflation, forced enlistment (economic conscription), and the threat of industrial regimentation. Protesters and strikers, rejecting accusations that they were placing their class interests before those of the nation, asserted that they were defending working and living conditions under attack by conservative forces, an attack disguised as patriotism. Rather than 'creating a nation', the Great War embittered an already divided Australia.*

Melbourne certainly was at war between 1914 and 1918, but the first shots were fired long before the warning shot sent across the bows of the German steamer *Pfalz* at Port Phillip Heads on 4 August.<sup>1</sup> During the Maritime Strike of 1890, Colonel Tom Price had rehearsed the shots to be fired in the class war that raged in Melbourne, with peaks and troughs, from the early 1900s to at least the mid-1950s. Preparing to front a mass protest meeting of trade unionists, Price was said to have advised his Victorian Mounted Rifles to 'fire low and lay the disturbers of law and order out'. When workers began to recover from the demoralising effects of the 1890s depression, assaults came from the government of William 'Iceberg' Irvine, who goaded the state's railway workers to strike and then stomped on them in 1903; from rabid anti-unionist Hugh Victor McKay, who attacked the Harvester Judgment of 1907, provoked his workers into a hopeless strike in 1911, and bankrupted their union for a generation; and in 1916-1917 from conservative forces that, in conjunction with Labor renegade W.M. Hughes, attempted to introduce military conscription for the

European war.<sup>2</sup> The labour movement interpreted conscription as a move for national militarisation and industrial mobilisation, and 1917 saw the peak of wartime class warfare. This is an aspect of Australia in the Great War that might very easily be overlooked in the coming four years of state-endorsed celebration/commemoration of the war that is commonly claimed to have made Australia a nation.

In 1917, Melbourne was not only a state capital, but also a national, and therefore a Dominion capital, a temporary status prolonged by the diversion of resources to the European war.<sup>3</sup> Melbourne metropolis was Australia's financial capital and the fastest growing and most heavily industrialising of Australia's state capitals; the population grew from 501,000 in 1901 to 800,000 in 1921, and industrial and transport employment as a percentage of the male workforce rose from 54 per cent to 59 per cent.<sup>4</sup> But conservative forces in rural and regional districts of 'this garden State' lamented the increasing concentration of population in Melbourne as unnatural and likely to increase the power of trade unions and the Labor Party.<sup>5</sup> These fears were confirmed when Melbourne became the epicentre of trade union and Labor-based anti-war sentiment and class warfare in 1916–1917, when the nation's megalomaniac prime minister and Melbourne's turbulent Catholic Archbishop Daniel Mannix engaged in dramatic exchanges over conscription and the rationale for the Australian commitment to the war.

Historians too often quarantine pre-war Australia from Australia during the war, treating the fraught nature of wartime class relations in isolation from what had gone before. In the winter and spring of 1917, south-eastern Australia was convulsed by a Great Strike that rivalled the Maritime Strike of 1890 in extent and impact, but the Great Strike, and Melbourne's involvement in it, had deep pre-war roots. This article examines a dramatic incident in Melbourne in September 1917 and explores its pre-war origins in an industrial relations system that was said to guarantee class harmony between workers and employers.

## Glass

The reckless and promiscuous breaking of windows ... [in the City last week by a] riotous crowd sought to draw attention to the misfortunes of the poor [but] succeeded only in convincing the people that a dangerous element in our population needs careful watching and close

guarding, in an internment camp, perhaps, since [they] are plainly more a menace to the public weal than one-half of the Germans so constrained.<sup>6</sup>

On Wednesday evening, 19 September 1917, a group of women socialists, the most prominent of them Adela Pankhurst, held a torchlight meeting at the Yarra Bank to demand cheap food for Melbourne's workers and workless. 'As Parliament will be closed at the end of the week', Pankhurst was reported to have said, 'I invite all present to go to Parliament House and make a protest ... about the high cost of living.'<sup>7</sup> Some 2,000 protesters then marched across Princes Bridge and along Flinders Street to Spring Street, by which time the number had grown to about 10,000. This was one of a series of Melbourne wartime food riots studied by Judith Smart, who has urged 'serious analysis of the composition and motivation of Melbourne crowds, the role of the leaders and the public participation of women.'<sup>8</sup> My purpose here is to extend her analysis of the demonstration of 19 September 1917, and to explore its pre-war origins as a means of understanding working-class disquiet that pre-dated the war.

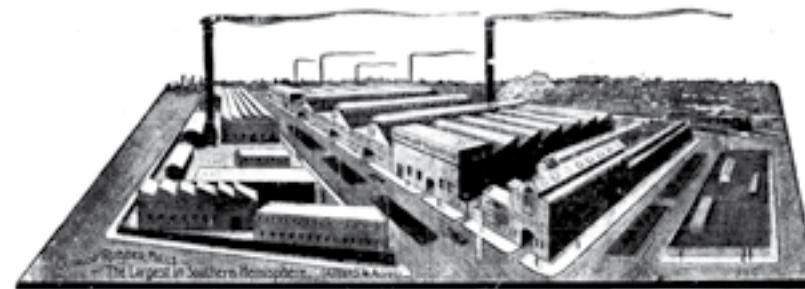
Police prevented the crowd from reaching parliament, and the only casualties were a mounted policeman struck by a brickbat and 'one constable in plain clothes struck on the head by a Mounted Policeman.'<sup>9</sup> Rather than breaking up and dispersing the crowd, as they later claimed, the police played catch-up with protesters, who simply divided into groups and smashed windows at will in streets darkened by a New South Wales coal strike. No coal, no gas, no light.



**The cheap food demonstration of 19 September 1917 was one of a series of protests and was well advertised.** Kiernan vs Walsh, Crown Solicitor's File, Series MP401/1, CL760, B/C364072, National Archives of Australia (NAA)

The results can be mapped using police and press reports and the Sands and McDougall Melbourne Directory.<sup>10</sup> Three shop windows were smashed at the eastern end of Flinders Street, one at the corner of Spring and Lonsdale streets, and (moving down Bourke Street) another three. They then proceeded to break a further 31, starting with five in Bourke Street, two in Little Collins Street, and another five in Collins Street, including those of the *Argus* and the *Age*. The crowd then wheeled into Elizabeth Street to smash eight windows down to Flinders Street, including the large plate glass windows of Craig Williamson's department store. The Flinders Street contingent, having smashed four windows between Exhibition and Swanston streets, crossed Swanston Street and went to work on windows along the way to Degraeves Street. Proceeding to 372 Flinders Street, between Queen and Market streets, to stone the premises of Mr J.B. Ellerker, the organiser of 'free' (or 'scab') strike-breaking labour, the crowd crossed Queen's Bridge and assailed Sennitt's iceworks and cool store, before proceeding along Yarra Bank and Normanby roads, South Melbourne. Outraged by the destruction (estimated value, £5,000 to £6,000), the press next morning described the violence as aimless, wanton, and capricious, ascribing the destruction to a disorderly rabble, a wilful mob of vandals that destroyed property at random. The *Age* wrote of 'turbulent women and hoodlums', a mob composed of 'degenerate and weak-minded people' joined by 'great numbers of curious idlers'; the police blamed slum hoodlums for augmenting the protesters.<sup>11</sup> The press and the police did not ponder the pattern of attack on the window panes. Where was the crowd heading when it crossed the Yarra into South Melbourne? Judith Smart dropped a clue: 'There is some evidence that particular premises were singled out by demonstrators for special attack'. Further, 'it is clear that the activities of the crowd were purposeful and specific.'<sup>12</sup> Too right they were.

The destruction started at the eastern end of the city (Frank Adams' motor garage, Tarrant Motors garage and hire department, Duncan & Co. motor car sales, the Bergougan Tyre Co. office, the Dunlop Tyre Co. office, Rhodes Motor Cycles showroom, and Tarrant Motors showroom No. 1) and later included a Flinders Street store offering discerning motorists trench coats designed for officers enduring wintry conditions on the Western Front. While some premises may have experienced collateral damage—the premises of some bespoke tailors, Sargents' stylish Elizabeth Street tea rooms (society caterers, advertising 'The



**Dunlop's rubber mill at Montague:** The largest in the Southern Hemisphere. *The Bulletin*, 25 December 1913, p. 29

Bride's favourite 3-Tier' wedding cake for a mere £2.10.0), and Norman Bros stationers—most were high-end retailers, and it is striking how many businesses in the city (seven out of 35) were related to motoring: showrooms and garages, motoring accessories, and tyre makers and sales. Clearly, the crowd was targeting retailers and servicers of limousines and their accessories—luxury goods, essentially. At the height of the mêlée in Elizabeth Street, a loyal citizen (a Mr Duncan of Canterbury) informed Senior Constable Cone that the crowd was 'going to wreck Dunlop's works'—the Dunlop Rubber Company's large rubber mill at Montague, South Melbourne.

Constable Maher and Sergeant Anderson were stationed at South Wharf. Maher had been walking his beat at 10.15 'when a riotous crowd of about seven or eight thousand persons travelled along Yarra Bank Road, and along the wharf, doing damage' before it 'surged along Normanby Road to the Dunlop Rubber Mills at Montague'. Anderson: 'I was in bed asleep when I was woke up by voices calling three cheers for Miss Pankhurst and the breaking of glass. I got out and joined Const. Maher 5593, a howling mob went past the station ... Police mounted and foot following'. He stayed with Maher until midnight, but his troubles were not over: 'At 1.15 the main waterpipe bursted [*sic*] and flooded the stationrooms and the skirting boards', he complained: 'I have been up all night'.<sup>13</sup> At Montague, the crowd, variously estimated from the hundreds to the thousands (but certainly not the 7–8,000 Maher claimed), and mainly (according to one account) comprising young men and girls, surrounded Dunlop's factory and used seven- and eight-pound missiles

to break scores of mesh-reinforced windows.<sup>14</sup> The crowd dispersed only when police fired their revolvers in the air.<sup>15</sup>

Why Dunlop? A great strike was then raging in the port of Melbourne and across the industrial suburbs. Did the fury of the crowd at Montague simply reflect Dunlop's recruitment of 700 volunteers to replace the 1,100 or so sacked when they refused to handle 'black' rubber (that is, rubber that had been transported by non-union labour)?<sup>16</sup> Or had the company earlier done something to generate such venom? Dunlop appears to have been anticipating trouble, for in September 1916 the company had applied to South Melbourne Council for permission to equip their night watchmen with firearms.<sup>17</sup>

### Rubber

The rubber industry exemplified Melbourne's manufacturing pre-eminence in the 1880s, the city's recovery from the 1890s depression, and the burst of industrialisation that preceded the war. Rubber was no recent discovery but advances in production (from plantations) and processing (mechanisation and chemical engineering) had transformed the old 'India rubber' or gutta percha into a modern miracle, truly one of a handful of industrial commodities indispensable to the 20th-century world. Mixed with sulphur at very high temperatures ('vulcanised'), rubber became highly valued as a flexible yet tough, impervious and acid-resistant material, able to be bonded with many materials and blended with textiles, and therefore the basis of a dazzling array of products used in every household, factory and mine. A seemingly inexhaustible demand for rubber was generated by the demand for pneumatic tyres from cyclists, motorists, and road hauliers.<sup>18</sup>

Pioneered by Barnet Glass, an emigrant Polish Jew who made waterproof garments, first in a Carlton workshop and later at his Pioneer Rubber Works at Kensington, the trade in rubber goods was broadened in 1893 by rivals supplying imported Dunlop pneumatic tyres to a city that climate and terrain made Australia's cycling capital. Emboldened by generous tariff protection, the local Dunlop Pneumatic Tyre Company acquired from its English parent the exclusive right to manufacture in Australia and, in 1901, exchanged their cramped inner Melbourne City quarters for a purpose-built mill on a large site at Montague. Dunlop acquired Barnet Glass but, when the federal tariff of 1908 promised Australian dominance of the national market for rubber goods, Barnet Glass re-emerged to build an up-to-date factory at Footscray.<sup>19</sup>

Thereafter, Dunlop and Barnet Glass dominated the industry, which had over 500 employees in 1909 and some 1,700 at the outbreak of war. About 1,200 of these were at Montague, where in 1914–1915 Dunlop built a four-storey mill.<sup>20</sup>

Despite some uncertainty in raw rubber supplies, the war years were profitable for the industry. The cessation of imports of the very popular German rubber goods gave Australian rubber mills a monopoly. Dunlop, the company's historian Geoffrey Blainey tells us, 'earned high profits in two of every three years from 1908 to 1920'. Generously funding the annual works picnic and donating to charities, Dunlop 'hoped for harmonious relations' with its employees. Blainey mentions the 1917 strike only in passing, and the attack on the mill not at all, but speculates that worker unhappiness reflected the company's inability to offer year-round work. Even in times of peace, seasonal fluctuations in employment were part and parcel of many industries, encouraging workers to unionise and push for a living wage and for wage rises. Short time was unlikely in itself to occasion industrial action. What would be the point of striking to demand more work? 'In 1914', Blainey observes, 'by overseas standards, the pay at Montague was high and the hours short.'<sup>21</sup> American scholars have shown that the United States industry was notorious for low pay and harsh working conditions. In Akron, Ohio, the world's greatest concentration of rubber barons and their mills, there was job insecurity, piece work at low rates, and the use of thugs and spies to undermine unionism, blacklist militants, crush strikes, and divide the workforce into company loyalists and 'others.'<sup>22</sup> How did Dunlop's Montague rubber mill compare?<sup>23</sup>

Industrial relations at Montague do not appear to have been as bad as in Akron, and employer behaviour was never so vicious. Nevertheless we can say that Dunlop does not appear to have shared its burgeoning profits with the workforce. Statistics do not exist to reveal labour costs as a proportion of production costs, but labour unit costs do not seem to have risen with the Melbourne cost of living. Early in 1919, the United Rubber Workers' Union pointed out that the current wages had been fixed three years earlier and had not been adjusted despite cost-of-living increases of at least a quarter.<sup>24</sup> Dissatisfaction with wage levels appears to offer the main explanation for deteriorating industrial relations at Montague, not only during the war years, but also in the years before.

The fury expressed at Montague on 19 September 1917 had its roots in company board and factory management fixation with profits, and with an industrial relations system that wound up worker anger over many years.

### **Victorian Wages Boards: 'the most perfect system of collective bargaining yet devised'?**

Victoria's chief inspector of factories, Henry Murphy, praised as 'the most perfect system of collective bargaining yet devised ... the Victorian Wages Boards, upon whom an equal number of representatives of employers and employees meet at a round table conference on terms of perfect equality, presided over by a neutral Chairman.'<sup>25</sup> By 1914, some 90 per cent of Victorian workers were covered by boards, which set minimum wages, specified hours of work, and defined the proportion of improvers (learners) and apprentices to experienced adult workers. Far from fostering tolerance and equality, however, this system was often a frustrating and negative experience for Melbourne's industrial workers. Indeed, Charles Fahey and I have concluded that the wages board system worsened industrial relations in the decade before the war.<sup>26</sup>

Board determinations, made by majority vote, including that of a nominally independent chairman, were binding throughout each trade. It took courage for worker representatives to negotiate with their employers, including businessmen of the calibre of, for example, Hugh Victor McKay (agricultural implements), James and William of the fertiliser Cuming family (artificial or chemical manures), and MacPherson Robertson (confectionery). Rubber workers, for instance, sat opposite Dunlop's Richard Garland, who had floated the company in 1899. Garland was chauffeur-driven from his Brighton mansion for his daily swim at the nearby beach, and to work at his Melbourne office, the rubber mill, and wages board meetings.<sup>27</sup>

From 1908, when the rubber workers first succeeded in obtaining a wages board, the average weekly wage for adult males was 36s 7d (about 6s 1d per day), well below the minimum of 7s per day recommended by Mr Justice Higgins in his Harvester Judgement of 1907 as appropriate to 'a human being living in a civilised community'.<sup>28</sup> Rubber workers aspired to the Higgins standard. Patricia Davey's fine study of the wages board system between 1896 and 1920 concluded that the boards initially resulted in increased wages but that 'after 1908 the cost of living rose and real wages failed to keep pace'. The wages boards legislation specified no wage-fixing principles and, even after Higgins's famous judgement,

the boards (and the Court of Industrial Appeals that adjudicated complaints) refused to entertain cost-of-living arguments. From 1913, real wages fell and unskilled workers especially suffered from depressed wages rates. War exacerbated the situation by dislocating trade in the maritime, metal trades and coal-mining industries, and led to inflation and higher living costs. In 1915, Victorian Premier Alexander Peacock, known as the 'father' of the wages boards system, announced a wartime embargo. Wages would remain frozen for the duration of the conflict. A threatened strike by engineers in July brought the conditional reinstatement of boards. Davey's conclusion for the whole period 1904–1920 is sobering: wages boards had proved unable to increase the share of wages from the net value added to manufacturing.<sup>29</sup> Thus, any claim that rubber workers' wages rates in 1914 were on a par with other wages paid in Victoria does not amount to much. Charles Fahey and I concluded that 'many workers [subjected to the wages board system] had class-consciousness thrust upon them'.<sup>30</sup> Rubber workers appear to have been among them.

The minutes of the Rubber Trade Board reveal rubber workers' protracted struggle for a living wage and better conditions. Rubber work was hot, dirty and enervating, sometimes dangerous to limb and life, and the chemicals used were certainly dangerous to health. The calendar machine that rolled out the masticated rubber in large sheets really could pull a worker through before the machine could be stopped. When Melbourne's rubber mills took to reclaiming rubber, they used dangerous, open, vats of acid.<sup>31</sup> Employer representatives openly disparaged the dangers, as well as the amount of skill required for most of the work. Most tasks, Dunlop mill superintendent John Kearns said, could be learned with a mere two weeks of training.<sup>32</sup> Negotiations for wage increases were protracted, and only minor adjustments were made each year or two. Employer representatives refused in 1912 and again in 1914 to adjust wages according to the cost of living. By contrast, in the first two years of the board, employers succeeded in increasing the proportions of learners over workers earning adult wages, and introduced piecework (apparently without the board setting rates of pay).<sup>33</sup> By 1914, bonuses were being paid to faster workers so as to increase the pace of work, and, in May 1916, Dunlop attempted to pit groups of workers on day and night shifts against one another in the dirtiest, heaviest, hottest section of the plant, that is, where the tyres were vulcanised at high temperatures. However, the men refused to

work at a pace that would have them running with perspiration, literally sweated labour.<sup>34</sup> The union had a long struggle to secure better pay rates for overtime, and night work rates took two years to negotiate.<sup>35</sup> The ‘threat’ of female labour to male jobs was another issue.<sup>36</sup> Even before the war, Dunlop’s rubber mill does not appear to have been a happy work place. During the Great Strike of 1917, the vast majority of Dunlop’s employees—1,104 in number—refused to work.<sup>37</sup> The strikers included three non-union foremen.

### The Great Strike in Melbourne

The industrial upheaval in Australia ... should result in the emancipation of the worker from his servile conditions under the domination of ... labour bosses [who] rely upon the mystification of the worker, who is led to believe that the employer is his natural enemy and that efficiency is detrimental to all but the “capitalist”.<sup>38</sup>

Dunlop’s workers, men and women, made common cause with New South Wales railway workers who were resisting the imposition of the time-card system that to them meant industrial regimentation and the speed up.<sup>39</sup> Many of Melbourne’s industrial workers were already experiencing features of the modern factory system they found objectionable. For many, the factory system being born in the 1900s and 1910s meant mechanisation, deskilling, piecework and the speed up, and the replacement of adult males on minimum wages with juveniles, ‘improvers’, and females. McKay’s harvester assembly line and Melbourne Glass Bottle Works bottle-blowing machines were frightening harbingers of this new factory world. Then came the disruption of war.

War in winter 1914 disrupted trade, and the failure of the spring rains presaged a severe drought.<sup>40</sup> Unemployment rocketed to over 14 per cent in the last quarter of 1914, and reached 14.6 per cent in the next quarter, or more than one in seven trade unionists.<sup>41</sup> In September 1914, the Port Melbourne *Standard* reported a growing ‘army of workless’: many ‘hands were put off temporarily in large numbers’, most severely at Dunlop where ‘some hundreds were stood down’.<sup>42</sup> Drought meant reduced orders for farm machinery, fertiliser and binder twine, industries that had been central to the Victorian recovery from the 1890s depression. Enlistment for a short European war, expected to be over by Christmas, was suddenly attractive to many young men.

Victorian enlistments peaked in 1915.<sup>43</sup> Few volunteers, however, declared themselves ‘unemployed’, for enlistment forms did not invite this response and are therefore unhelpful in estimating unemployment as a spur to ‘patriotic volunteering’. As we have noted, early in 1915 the Victorian government suspended wages boards, effectively a wages freeze. The Newcastle NSW coal strike in late 1916 closed 70 industrial firms in South Melbourne, affecting 1,500 Dunlop workers, only 70 of whom were re-engaged after three weeks.<sup>44</sup> Families whose breadwinners lost their jobs or experienced interrupted employment could take months to recover, with rent arrears and tradesmen’s bills simply postponed. Unemployment rose again to 10.6 per cent in 1917. From early 1917, rubber workers abandoned the Victorian wages board system and transferred their efforts and hopes for wage justice to the federal arbitration court.

The Melbourne wharf labourers’ union, demanding that the federal government lower food prices and release food from storage, placed an embargo on exports of certain foodstuffs. Very soon the Melbourne dispute became linked with those of railwaymen and wharfies in New South Wales. Across Melbourne, workers refused to touch goods handled by non-union labour. As Judith Smart has pointed out, the Great Strike put 14,500 men and women out of work for up to two and a half months, at a time of mounting food prices, an accelerating cost of living, a deepening despair among workers and their families, and the emergence of significant hunger. Catching union leaders and the Trades Hall Council by surprise, the strike proved impossible to control. In addition, in Melbourne’s western suburbs there was also a strike at the Spotswood bottle works involving men who, deskilled by machines, had seen their pay packets shrink, and at Footscray 1,000 employees were dismissed at the Colonial Ammunition works when army contracts expired.<sup>45</sup> On 1 August, a Labor Party and Melbourne Trades Hall Council deputation urged the premier to act to alleviate the conditions of between 8,000 and 10,000 unemployed unionists. ‘After the war broke out’, Deputy Labor Leader J.W. Billson claimed,

there was an unofficial agreement that the Government and private employers would keep in employment all the men it was possible to employ. Unfortunately, a very large number of men had been dismissed ... At Newport [railway workshops] at the present time only half the number of men were employed as compared with August, 1914.<sup>46</sup>

The labour movement was (correctly) anticipating another attempt by Hughes's Win the War Party to introduce conscription. The mutterings about 'economic conscription' in 1915–1916 had become a roar of protest after the rejection of conscription in October 1916. As enlistments declined, recruiting officers and committees targeted places such as shopping strips, cinemas and workplaces. With employer blessing, they addressed lunchtime gatherings at factories, sawmills, quarries and the like. Newport railway workshops men had perhaps been induced to enlist by the railways commissioners' offer to make up their pay, reserve their jobs, and preserve their seniority while they were overseas,<sup>47</sup> and the unveiling of workplace honour boards in each department (naming enlisted and 'fallen' workmates) became occasions for pressuring men into war service. Many other employers, including the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, employed similar inducements. Hugh Victor McKay, not given to subtlety or sentimentality, obliged his employees to fill in an 'intention to enlist' form, of the 'If not now, when?' style. By 1917, the Sunshine Harvester Works had an honour board with hundreds of names, those who had 'fallen' identified by the bold word 'KILLED' in block capitals. The families that owned the Michaelis Hallenstein tannery were conspicuous supporters of the war. Several family members enlisted, and were duly honoured by plaques at the works and, along with employees of the firm, on a granite memorial on Tannery Hill at Footscray. But among the list of 'fallen' was at least one person whose name a friend had to restrain himself from removing, as one who had not 'fallen' but been pushed.<sup>48</sup>

Increasingly, the labour movement formed the view that workers were bearing an unfair portion of the burden of the war and that recruitment was targeting the industrial class. Prime Minister Hughes did not disabuse them. At one protest meeting federal Labor Leader Frank Tudor said 'it was wrong that one section of the community should have to struggle for the necessities of life while a few had most of the luxuries. It was said that there was always a job at the war ... There should be no conscription in Australia, economic or otherwise.' He denounced war profiteering, and high food prices. The deputation that subsequently waited on Hughes to put the plight of 700 discharged female ammunition workers met what the press described as 'a churlish reception': 'Replying ... Mr Hughes said he was sorry that people had been dismissed, but they could not have it both ways. If they would not

send sufficient numbers out of the country to fight, they would not make the ammunition.'<sup>49</sup> He appeared to have decided that unemployment was a legitimate way of reinforcing the AIF, Australia's vaunted 'volunteer' army.

While we should not conflate anti-conscriptionist sentiment and anti-war feeling, 1917 saw a strong growth, not just of war weariness, but also of outright anti-war sentiment. The labour movement was anticipating from Hughes a second attempt to introduce conscription. By September 1917, there was an angry and desperate edge to working-class protest. Linking the Melbourne city food riot to the Great Strike, the *Argus* editorialised: 'feeling respecting the strike is running higher as its hopelessness becomes more clearly demonstrated.'<sup>50</sup> Striking Melbourne workers had limited funds to send to their comrades in New South Wales, and the federal and Victorian governments, urged on by employers, refused to interfere in the railway strike, control the cost of living, or release stocks of food. The Great Strike did not so much end as peter out over many weeks, an ignominious defeat for workers all round, with unionists engaged in recriminations and strikers forced to crawl back to work as humiliated mendicants. The coal shortages that had thrown many out of work continued after the official ending of the strike, leading to weeks of power rationing and a staggered resumption of work that prolonged Melbourne distress into October.

The Melbourne food riots were about persistent unemployment, the high cost of living and actual hunger, all made acute by the Great Strike. The contrast between penury and plenty had fuelled discontent; good seasons in 1916 and 1917 and continuing shipping shortages created in Melbourne towering wheat stacks and bulging cool stores and freezing works. The protesters who smashed the windows of Sennitt's Queen's Bridge cool store were concealed by piles of crates in which 'underground mutton' had been consigned from country Victoria, but which the hungry could not afford to buy. Those who proceeded to attack Dunlop's rubber mill at Montague were striking workers (or their sympathisers) who had experienced a decade of frustration with their employer and their employers' representatives on the Rubber Trade Wages Board. But the wave of class conflict that broke in 1917 had its origins in Justice Higgins' Harvester Judgment of 1907, which had raised working-class hopes of wage justice, only to see them dashed by an inflexible system of wages boards, and by wartime governments

that would neither tax wealth nor control prices. Dr Mannix was one of Melbourne's few public men who could see an element of justice in the strikers' protest. Secretary for Labour Henry Murphy, speaking in the archbishop's winter lecture series, revealed the disparity between profits and wages: the average rise in wages 1909–1915 had totalled £24 5s, whereas manufacturers had passed on the higher labour cost to the consumers, pocketing £129 5s average return for goods made by each employee. Dr Mannix, presiding, asked 'Was there not in that a great temptation for strikes in Australia?'

### **Adela Pankhurst at Yarraville: 'glass windows have no feeling'**

On the evening of 20 September, the night following the cheap food demonstration at Parliament House, Adela Pankhurst went to Yarraville to support fundraising for the strikers' starving wives and children.<sup>51</sup> A major centre of the strike with its wharves, and sugar, rope and fertiliser workers refusing to handle 'black' goods, riverside Yarraville had a long history of class tension and conflict. During the maritime strike of 1890, in a local performance of *For the Term of His Natural Life*, Colonel Tom Price's alleged instructions—'fire low and lay them out'—had been put into the mouth of convict-oppressor Maurice Frere, whom Marcus Clark had modelled on John Price, the colonel's father, murdered at Williamstown in 1854.

Adela Pankhurst was no stranger to the district, but the changed tenor of her reception over the years 1915–1917 showed how fundamentally working-class attitudes to the war had changed. In November 1915, the Footscray branch of the Labor Party had dismissed her letter advocating a European truce to discuss peace terms as the work of 'an idiot' and Kaiser-sympathiser.<sup>52</sup> But, in April 1916, when addressing the same branch, 'her remarks were followed with close interest and attention, and she was accorded 'a hearty vote of thanks'.<sup>53</sup> In November 1916, she spoke at the invitation of the Women's Organising Committee of the branch; the local newspaper, while decidedly unimpressed with her views, conceded that she was a 'young, petite and remarkably fluent [speaker who] held her audience gripped for an hour's fast-delivered address'.<sup>54</sup>

In September 1917 some 2,000 people crammed into the Lyric Theatre at Yarraville. Miss Pankhurst was received as a heroine. Speaking (the attending police noted) for an hour and a half at 150 words a minute, she savaged the censorship that denied Australians precise knowledge of

the dimensions of the European war and the magnitude of the losses. The workers fed and clothed the armies, she asserted, provided the surplus to wage the war, and would be expected to work harder under the NSW card system to pay the war debts. 'The politicians' work is not like your work. [They] sit on Wednesday and rise on Thursday ... They do not speed up much, do they?' Only men in the prime of life would be able to keep up; those who could not would be discarded. What would become of the war wounded? 'You have no money in the war loans, have you friends, no land, no houses ... no factories that you can make somebody else work for you [?]' As for the current hunger, 'there is more food in Australia today than we can use, the rats and mice are eating it'. When shipping became available, the food would be shipped off overseas for inflated prices. 'Sir Alex. Peacock ... said the food belongs to those who own it, and we can no more force a man to sell his food than we can force a man to sell his labour. [But] they do force ... men to sell their labour'. Strikes were declared illegal, organisers prosecuted, and men tried for conspiracy. 'One of the first duties of the community is to see that conditions are not worse than when [the soldiers] went away. We are striking against the system that is going to make slaves of the people.' And then she uttered the words that would seal her conviction and gaoled her for inciting violence:

We have done everything we can think of to persuade the government to take action and protect the people against the profiteers, everything we can think of ... but there was absolutely no notice taken at all ... we had to adopt other methods, you saw the results of it last night. Panes of glass smashed. Anyway, glass windows have got no feeling whatever.

Gaols could not be built big enough to hold them. The military, 'your sons and husbands, your brothers,' would not shoot them, and if they did, 'where would further recruits come from?' She forecast 'the time is coming' when wealth would be fairly distributed, and when production would not be permitted for private profit.<sup>55</sup> Miss Pankhurst's speech, the Yarraville *Weekly News* reported, was 'frequently punctuated by cheers' and, at the finish, she received 'another great ovation,' several hundred admirers who had not been able to gain admission then escorting her to the station.<sup>56</sup>

Radical protesters, Pankhurst's speech and its reception tell us, were looking to post-war Australia. What would life and work be like if

the war had not only drained the nation of its young manhood but also undermined wages and working conditions? For industrial labour, the issue was not one of 'class or nation' but of class *and* nation.

### Conclusion

Forty years ago, in the epilogue to *The Broken Years*, Bill Gammage wrote that the 'radical nationalists [who] had led the drive for a social paradise in Australia' were so discomfited and divided by the war 'as to leave leaderless ... that general majority which had sought to create a social paradise in Australia'.<sup>57</sup> To regard the conscription plebiscites of 1916–1917 and the Great Strike of 1917 as shattering such a broad pre-war social and political consensus is surely to accord the war too much influence. Class-based tensions had deepened and escalated for at least a decade before 1917, from the Harvester Judgement of 1907, through Alfred Deakin's abandonment of the social compact promised by New Protection, and mounting employer resistance to the living wage. By the outbreak of war, the drive for a workers' paradise had already been betrayed and sapped. The heirs to Deakin's Fusion, and their conservative business allies, had defeated the attempts by the Fisher Labor government, the first federal majority government, for constitutional change by referenda in 1911 and 1913. Nails had been driven into the coffin of the workers' paradise well before Joseph Cook's Liberals turned the 1914 election into a khaki campaign that saw Labor jettison its domestic program. During 1914 and early 1915, the war may have briefly diverted Australian workers from their on-going, long-term, class war. But in 1916 and 1917 the industrial working class, or a substantial part of it, concluded that their opponents were continuing the class war under the guise of a patriotic war. The conflicts of 1916–1917 entrenched class warfare with a bitterness, now underscored by anti-Catholic sectarianism, which would last 40 years or more.<sup>58</sup> But, over the next four years of official commemoration, how much will we hear of the Great War that, rather than creating a nation, further divided a nation?

### NOTES:

- 1 Fired from Fort Nepean, and forcing the *Pfalz* to return to port, this is commonly described as the British Empire's opening shot of the war.
- 2 On Price, see C.D. Coulthard-Clark, 'Thomas Caradoc Rose Price (1842–1911)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 11, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1988, pp. 289–90; on Irvine, J.M. Bennett and Ann G. Smith, 'Sir William Hill Irvine (1858–1943)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 9, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1983, pp. 439–41; on McKay, John Lack, 'Hugh Victor McKay (1865–1926)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 10, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1986, pp. 291–4, and John Lack, 'The Legend of H.V. McKay', *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol. 61, nos. 2–3, August 1990, pp. 124–57.
- 3 *Age*, 24 September 1917 (approving editorial), p. 6.
- 4 *Australian Census*, 1901 and 1921, Table: 'Occupations of the People'.
- 5 See *Age*, 25 September 1917 (sub-leader), p. 6, and *Age* article on 29 September 1917, p. 4: 'The Drift to the City: Victoria's Parlous Position', with its reference to 'this garden State'.
- 6 *Melbourne Punch*, 27 September 1917, p. 5.
- 7 Sub-inspector J. McPherson, in 'Reports on the Meeting at the Yarra Bank and Disorderly Conduct in the City Last Night', Kiernan vs Walsh, Crown Solicitor's File, Series MP401/1, CL760, B/C364072, National Archives of Australia (NAA).
- 8 Judith Smart, 'Feminists, Food and the Fair Price: The Cost of Living Demonstrations in Melbourne, August – September 1917', *Labour History*, no. 50, May 1986, p. 114.
- 9 McPherson, 'Reports on the Meeting'.
- 10 *Age*, 20 September 1917, p. 8; 21 September 1917, p. 6; *Argus*, 20 September 1917, p. 7; 21 September 1917, p. 7; *Argus* editorial, 21 September 1917, p. 6; *Leader*, 22 September 1917, p. 28; *Weekly Times*, 22 September 1917, p. 31.
- 11 The above references, and quotations from the *Age*, 21 September 1917, p. 6, and 25 September 1917 (sub-leader), p. 6; McPherson, 'Reports on the Meeting'. The *Argus* considered the window smashing 'premeditated' (21 September 1917, p. 7), and police reports thought them 'planned'.
- 12 Smart, p. 22, text and footnote 57.
- 13 Police reports accompanying McPherson, 'Report on the Meeting'.
- 14 *Argus*, 20 September 1917, p. 7.
- 15 *Leader*, 22 September 1917, p. 31.
- 16 *Australian Motorist*, 1 October 1917, p. 153: 'Battles are reported every night between the national workers [meaning strike-breaking volunteers] and the strikers in proximity to the Dunlop Rubber Mills. Feelings evidently were running high at Montague, but I have found no other reports of these battles.'
- 17 *Record* (South Melbourne), 30 September 1916, p. 2. In 1917, police reported rumours of anti-conscriptionist and socialist plans to burn down Dunlop's factory by planting dummies in the factory workforce: 'the burning will be done from the inside'. Detective Olholm of the Victorian CIB to Superintendent Shaw, 21 September

- 1917, accompanying McPherson, 'Report on the Meeting'. Raw rubber was highly flammable.
- 18 See Geoffrey Blainey's company history of Pacific Dunlop, *Jumping Over the Wheel*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1993; John Loadman, *Tears of the Tree: The Story of Rubber—A Modern Marvel*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003; and especially John Tully, *The Devil's Milk: A Social History of Rubber*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 2011, pp. 17–18, 50, and chs 2–3.
  - 19 This paragraph relies heavily on Blainey, chs 1–3.
  - 20 This building still stands, converted to a self-storage facility. Employment and expansion figures: *Argus*, 17 October 1914, p. 16; 5 May 1915, p. 11; 29 November 1915, p. 8; *Australasian*, 11 September 1915, p. 24.
  - 21 Blainey, pp. 101, 92–3, 91, 92. See also *Argus*, 24 October 1917, p. 7; 1 November 1917, p. 5.
  - 22 Tully, chs 9–11; 'Gum Workers', in Howard and Ralph Wolf, *Rubber: A Story of Glory and Greed*, New York, Covici Friede Publishers, 1936, pp. 497–509.
  - 23 The Barnet Glass rubber mill at Footscray has been excluded from this analysis because of paucity of information and being unable to locate company records. Some press reports suggest a happier state of affairs there, others record tensions and wartime stoppages over wages, but there appear to be no reports of violence. The Barnet Glass representative on the Rubber Trade Wages Board did not break ranks with his Dunlop colleagues.
  - 24 Blainey, pp. 98, 101.
  - 25 H.M. Murphy, *Wages and Prices in Australia: Our Labour Laws and their Effects*, Melbourne, George Robertson & Co., n.d. [1917], p. 7.
  - 26 Charles Fahey and John Lack, 'The Great Strike of 1917 in Victoria: Looking Fore and Aft, and from Below', in Frank Bongiorno *et al* (eds), *Labour and the Great War: The Australian Working Class and the Making of Anzac Labour History*, no. 106, May 2014, special issue published by the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, pp. 69–97, especially pp. 81–8.
  - 27 Fahey and Lack, 'The Great Strike of 1917', pp. 84–6; on Richard Garland, see Blainey, p. 100. Garland's Federation mansion survives, with a Sussex Street, Brighton, address.
  - 28 On the judgement, see Charles Fahey and John Lack, 'Harvester Men and Women: The Making of the Harvester Decision', in Julie Kimber and Peter Love (eds), *The Time of Their Lives: The Eight Hour Day and Working Life*, Melbourne, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 2007, pp. 65–85. The Rubber Workers' Union, alleging that employers had reneged on an agreement to support the creation of a board in exchange for union support for increases in the tariff on imported rubber goods, and that sweating conditions existed in the trade, provided sworn evidence that wages as low as 25s to 30s a week were being paid to married men. See the file of correspondence relating to, and determinations of the Rubber Trade Board, VPRS 5466/P/158, Public Record Office Victoria (PROV).
  - 29 Patricia Ruth Davey, 'Wages Boards in Victoria, 1896–1920', PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 1975, esp. pp. 43–97 (quoted from p. 77).
  - 30 Fahey and Lack, 'The Great Strike of 1917', p. 84. This article was illustrated with reference to agricultural implement makers, chemical fertiliser workers, and sugar refinery employees.
  - 31 A workman who fell into an acid vat at Barnet Glass lived for a day. *Argus*, 11 January 1912, p. 5; 13 January 1912, p. 22.
  - 32 Rubber Trade Minutes, 25 June 1909, Rubber Trade Board Minute Book 1909–1949, VPRS 5467/P/21, PROV.
  - 33 Rubber Trade Minutes, especially for May 1911.
  - 34 Rubber Trade Minutes, especially for May 1914; *Argus*, 29 April 1916, p. 18; 1 May 1916, p. 9; 2 May 1916, p. 8 (for the company's position); 3 May 1916, p. 11.
  - 35 *Argus*, 11 January 1916, p. 8.
  - 36 The annual reports of the chief inspector of factories for 1908–1920, which break down the work force in each trade by gender, reveal that the number and proportion of female rubber workers rose steadily 1909–1913, and then strongly from 1915, in 1919 comprising 493/2003, almost 25 per cent of the workforce. This trend may have contributed to workplace tension, male unionists regarding female employees as a threat to their jobs. The union's attempt to discuss equal pay was rebuffed.
  - 37 These are company figures. *Argus*, 1 November 1917, p. 7.
  - 38 Editorial, *Australian Motorist* (Melbourne), 1 September 1917, p. 51.
  - 39 The best account of the origins and course of the strike is by Dan Coward, 'Crime and Punishment: The Great Strike in New South Wales, August to October 1917', in John Iremonger, John Merritt and Graeme Osborne (eds), *Strikes: Studies in Twentieth Century Australian Social History*, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1973, pp. 51–80. Lucy Taksa is the pre-eminent historian of Australian resistance to 'time and motion' Taylorist work regimes. See, for instance, her article "'Defence not Defiance": Social Protest and the NSW General Strike of 1917', *Labour History*, no. 60, May 1991, pp. 16–33.
  - 40 This was to be Victoria's worst season since the Federation drought that broke in 1903, but bumper seasons followed.
  - 41 Commonwealth Labour Reports, 1914 and 1915.
  - 42 *Standard* (Port Melbourne), 26 September 1914, p. 3.
  - 43 L.L. Robson, 'The Origin and Character of the First A.I.F., 1914–18: Some Statistical Evidence', *Historical Studies*, vol. 15, no. 61, October 1973, pp. 737–49. High Victorian enlistments in 1915 as the result of a concerted recruitment drive, possibly sparked resentment of later drives, economic conscription, and conscription proposals. The Victorian vote, narrowly in favour of conscription in October 1916, turned narrowly against in December 1917.
  - 44 *Record* (Emerald Hill: South Melbourne), 18 and 25 November, p. 2, 2 December 1916, p. 2. Half of the workforce at Barnet Glass rubber mill, Footscray, numbering several hundred, was discharged. See *Weekly News* (Yarraville), 2 December 1916, p. 2.
  - 45 *Advertiser* (Footscray), 21 July 1917, p. 2.

- 46 *Weekly Times*, 4 August 1917, p. 34, reporting the deputation of 1 August. John William Billson was always known as J.W. Billson. Employment figures given by the Victorian railways commissioners 1914–1918 do not distinguish workshop employees, but the total employed fell from 24,589 at 30 June 1914 to 19,323 at 30 June 1918, a reduction of 5,536 (more than 20 per cent) that was attributed in the commissioners' 1918 report to the reduction in new works and the construction of rolling stock. See 'Report of the Victorian Railway Commissioners for the Year Ending 30 June 1918', *Victorian Parliamentary Papers*, Session 1918, Vol. 2, Paper No. 17, p. 27. The number of temporary staff declined by more than a third over the same period.
- 47 Leo J. Harrigan, *Victorian Railways to '62*, Melbourne, Victorian Railways Public Relations and Betterment Board, n.d. [1962/3], p. 157. In hiring, the railways gave preference to returned soldiers, but the issue of their permanency was left until after the war.
- 48 Author's conversation with Mr Joe Merry of Footscray in the early 1970s.
- 49 *Independent* (Footscray), 4 August 1917, p. 2.
- 50 *Argus*, 21 September 1917, p. 6.
- 51 *Independent* (Footscray), 6 October 1917, p. 1.
- 52 *Advertiser* (Footscray), 27 November 1915, p. 2.
- 53 *Independent* (Footscray), 6 May 1916, p. 3 ('Report as Censored'), advocating peace.
- 54 *Advertiser* (Footscray), 25 November 1916, p. 2: for the release of those imprisoned for resisting the government's A.M.F. proclamation. All three local papers covered this speech.
- 55 'Notes of speech by Adela Pankhurst at Yarraville Hall on the 20th September 1917', 'Kiernan vs Walsh, Crown Solicitor's File, Series MP401/1, CL760, B/C364072, NAA; Smart, p. 121.
- 56 'Miss Adela Pankhurst Justifies the Riot', *Weekly News*, 22 September 1917, p. 2.
- 57 Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War*, Canberra, Australian National University, 1974, p. 278.
- 58 The country Economy faction of the Liberal Party triumphed at the Victorian election November 1917. Labor's appeal for an increase in Melbourne's parliamentary representation came to nothing. The *Australasian*, the weekly paper of the *Argus*, intended especially for country readers, rejected a redistribution of seats as the demand of 'agitators'. *Australasian*, 10 November 1917, p. 34. Victorian conservatives denied Labor reasonable parliamentary representation for a generation. D.W. Rawson, 'Victoria, 1910–1966: Out of Step, or Merely Shuffling?', *Historical Studies*, vol. 13, no. 49, October 1967, pp. 60–75.

## Frank Anstey, Money Power and the Labour Split in War Time

Peter Love

### Abstract

*Frank Anstey was a prominent critic of the war and especially the war policy of the Fisher and Hughes governments. He became one of the leading figures in the oppositional left faction of the Labor Caucus that opposed the war policy of the federal government. This article argues Anstey's trajectory was different to most of his left faction due to his theoretical approach to labour matters, which allowed him to develop a distinctive critique of the empire, nation and his own party. He forged a radical populist theory of the political economy of finance capital, which he termed the 'Money Power'. As the Labor Party split and political divisions widened during the war, Anstey steadily distanced himself from the Labor Party and the unions, to identify with what he saw as an insurgent working class.*

As competition between European empires and national rivalries increased, complex alliances heightened political volatility and an arms race intensified distrust, there were many voices sounding war's alarms. When the European powers blundered towards the murderous folly that began with the Austro-Hungarian declaration of war on Serbia on 28 July 1914, all the arguments and agitation of pacifists, moderate liberals, feminists and socialists were swiftly overwhelmed by rising tides of truculent patriotism. The Hardie-Vaillant resolution of the Second International urging the European working class to make 'war against war' proved tragically futile.<sup>1</sup> When forced to choose, workers across the Continent responded to the call of country rather than class. They marched off to confront each other, entirely innocent of the industrial scale of the slaughter that awaited them.

As war loomed in Europe, Australia was in the midst of a double-dissolution federal election, in which Liberal Prime Minister Joseph Cook was up against Labor's Andrew Fisher. Both leaders made it abundantly clear that any government they led would be resolutely behind the Empire. As Fisher told his Colac audience, 'But should the

worst happen after everything has been done that honour will permit, Australians will stand behind our own to help and defend her to our last man and our last shilling.<sup>2</sup> Cook made similar, though less resonant declarations. As other Dominions such as Canada and New Zealand made bold commitments of troops and material, the new Governor General Munro Ferguson sent misleading reports to the Colonial Office about the ‘indescribable enthusiasm and entire unanimity’ in support of the ‘Empire in war.’<sup>3</sup> He also pressured the electorally preoccupied Cook Cabinet to make a decisive commitment, which they did on 3 August, and Munro Ferguson cabled the carefully-worded statement to the Secretary of State in London immediately.

In the event of war Commonwealth of Australia [is] prepared to place vessels of Australian Navy under control of British Admiralty when desired. Further prepared to dispatch expeditionary force [of] 20,000 men of any suggested composition to any destination desired by the Home Government. Force to be at complete disposal of the Home Government. Cost of dispatch and maintenance would be borne by this Government. Australian press notified accordingly.<sup>4</sup>

Even though, constitutionally, Australia was at war if Britain was at war, it was nevertheless a remarkably open ended affirmation of fidelity to the Imperial cause. It was made, moreover, a day before Britain declared war on Germany. Not only were they keen to line up before hostilities commenced, the Empire’s first shot in anger was fired from Fort Nepean across the bow of a German freighter on 5 August as it tried to escape through the heads of Port Phillip Bay.

After 4 August reactions were more mixed than Munro Ferguson’s ‘entire unanimity’. But while there were private reservations about what a war would mean, in the public sphere there was an outward display of support, exemplified by the strong flow of recruits for the First Australian Imperial Force. The early waves of patriotic sentiment initially overwhelmed the minority of dissident or doubting voices. This was apparent in Fisher’s election manifesto.

As regards the attitude of Labor towards war, that is easily stated: We deplore War! We believe war to be a crime against civilization and against humanity. But to deplore and to denounce war is not to abolish it. War is one of the greatest realities of life, and it must be faced. Our interests and our very existence are bound up with those of the Empire.

In time of war half measures are worse than none. If returned with a majority, we shall pursue with the utmost vigor and determination every course necessary for the defence of the Commonwealth and the Empire in any and every contingency.<sup>5</sup>

When Fisher led his Labor team to electoral victory in both houses of the parliament, the prospect of political stability supporting a resolute war policy seemed likely. There had been bipartisan support for the Imperial cause during the election, the emergency powers available under the Constitution in time of declared war strengthened the government’s hand and the provisions of the *War Precautions Act*, passed in October 1914, gave it a powerful legal instrument to deal with doubt, dissent and disloyalty. After August 1914, sustaining a radical critique of this war for ‘King and Country’ was a daunting prospect, courting accusations of disloyalty, sedition or treason. Feminists and pacifists, socialists, syndicalists and industrial militants, presumed enemy aliens and Irish nationalists, all felt the coercive force of the government’s legal arsenal. But as the war ground on, hard military realities and economic hardship bred growing discontent. Fault lines along the structures of inequality widened and overt resistance grew.

From the earliest months of the war there were deep ideological differences within the Caucus of the Fisher government. The small minority of Labor parliamentarians who opposed the war or were sceptical of their government’s policies to win it, were initially outnumbered and effectively ostracized by the pragmatic, loyalist majority in the party. Radical Labor MHR Frank Anstey was a leading figure in that left faction and, as such, was not considered suitable for election to the Ministry. His opposition to the war and the Fisher Government’s prosecution of it became a driving obsession, particularly against his erstwhile friend and Caucus colleague William Morris Hughes, Attorney General and bellicose leader of the dominant ‘Win the War’ faction. Anstey’s war consisted of a series of battles between ideas and arguments over what they were fighting for, the content and conduct of war policy and the future that awaited them when military hostilities ended.

By 1914 Frank Anstey was widely known as one of the Labor Party’s more acute, energetic and declamatory federal members. After stowing away in London as a fourteen-year-old he made his way to Australia, where he worked as a cabin boy and seaman along the east coast. In

the late 1880s he left the sea and worked in Sydney, Sale and, by the early 1890s had married and settled in Melbourne. There he immersed himself in the radical milieu of labour and socialist groups in that tempestuous decade. Through tireless activism in his union, working as a founder of a producer and consumer co-operative and a labour newspaper, he built the foundations for a parliamentary career. After an unsuccessful attempt in 1900, he won the Victorian Legislative Assembly seat of East Bourke Boroughs in 1902 and retained its successor Brunswick. In 1910 he shifted to the Commonwealth parliament by winning the seat of Bourke that covered an enlarged area in the same inner-northern suburbs of Melbourne.



**Frank Anstey, MHR, at the time of the Great War.**  
National Library of Australia, nla pic-an22445539

In federal parliament Anstey established a reputation as a vigorous, witty, occasionally vicious, but almost always engaging orator. He was a prolific writer of entertaining and polemical articles for the *Tocsin/Labor Call* newspaper he helped establish and occasionally edited. He was an energetic country organiser of Labor Party branches, which helped inform his detailed writing on rural closer settlement policy. In the federal parliament he moved more in the direction of monetary policy where his views on banking and finance were inclined towards a left populist analysis of power in the capitalist system. In the lead up to, and the early months of the war, he was one of Labor's most vociferous critics of what he saw as the relationship between interlocking capitalist cartels in banking, finance and the munitions industries that fostered and profited from war.<sup>6</sup>

In April 1914 Anstey and his comrades at the *Labor Call* turned their attention to the threat of war. They began by reprinting a long interview with Norman Angell, author of the widely read *The Great*

*Illusion*. The interview ended on an optimistic note, urging international co-operation to prevent war because:

War has failed, and wars have been made possible – nay, inevitable – only because of ignorance, misunderstanding, insane rivalries, which interested parties have exploited and played upon.<sup>7</sup>

Shortly after, they began to serialise George Kirkpatrick's *War – What For?* and reprinted Phillip Snowden's House of Commons speech, which purported to expose an 'Armaments Ring'.<sup>8</sup>

Drawing heavily on sources such as these, Anstey developed his own variation on the same theme. He published a long list of British politicians, army and naval officers, senior clergymen and newspapermen who were linked to the War Trust by a network of financial and social connections. All had a part to play in stimulating hatreds, planning and conducting hostilities, sanctifying the slaughter and maintaining jingoistic hysteria:

The moneyed capitalist class interested in the sale of material, and the military section interested in the maintenance of an exclusive caste, are astute enough to trade on the racial pride and upon the sentimental traditions of the multitude. To this pride and those traditions they address themselves, whether from press or platform, whether to German or British, and by these means nations are kept apart, industries crippled, multitudes kept poor, that a non-productive class may be created, and the makers of war material grow richer and more powerful.

To Anstey, the contemporary political lesson was obvious:

This is not the way to 'defend civilisation'. The Labor movement functioned to make war upon hunger, disease, dirt, destitution, ignorance, unemployment and slums, not upon imaginary enemies – enemies that no man can tell you who they are or what they are.<sup>9</sup>

Although articles such as these set Anstey apart from the majority of his party comrades, he was not alone. After some initial equivocation, the Victorian Socialist Party endorsed the call for a strike against armaments production. Anstey's protégé John Curtin was instrumental in persuading the Melbourne Trades Hall Council to adopt a similar motion. The Sydney *International Socialist* took the same position on 'The Mad Drama in Europe'. The Industrial Workers of the World

adopted a characteristically tough stance in denouncing ruling class patriots, calling for a general strike and exhorting workers not to enlist.<sup>10</sup>

Despite expressions of patriotic fervor in the lead up to the 5 September 1914 election, Anstey was not much troubled by the constituents of Bourke taking him to task for his views on the war. In his speeches he stuck to Labor's record in social and industrial legislation, and on those occasions where he did refer to the war it was usually to commend the Fisher government's work in building up Australia's defences, particularly the navy. Jennings, the Liberal candidate put up a good, solid campaign, despite divisions within conservative ranks, but he could not compete with Labor's well-organised team which, in a national swing to the ALP, secured an increased majority, raising Anstey's share of the vote to nearly 66 per cent.<sup>11</sup>

In his union constituency, he was equally canny in choosing when to 'lie doggo' and when to attack. As president of the Victorian Branch of the Tramways Union, on 21 September he chaired a meeting of the union's committee of management. It decided to give a quarter of its Patriotic Fund money to the Belgian Relief Fund, a quarter to the Red Cross and half for the relief of distress among the dependents of tramway employees killed or wounded in the war. The minutes record no discussion or dissent on the resolution.<sup>12</sup>

When patriotic funds were discussed by the House of Representatives, Fisher moved a motion that a grant of £100,000 be paid to neutral Belgium, which had been invaded by Germany. Anstey opposed it on the grounds that there could be no guarantee that it would go to truly deserving Belgians, given their government's treatment of miners in a recent strike. Their king, moreover, was a plutocratic imperialist who had amassed a fortune by ruthlessly exploiting native people in the Congo. Besides, no money should go abroad until the growing unemployment and destitution in Australia had been eliminated.<sup>13</sup> People who knew Anstey and his works would not have been surprised by this. It was, nevertheless, a significant moment, because it was not really about Belgium as Anstey had effectively declared war on the Fisher government.

His first skirmish was over censorship. In late September he denounced a raid by military authorities on Vida Goldstein's *Woman Voter*. Their only crime, according to Anstey, was to draw attention to the horrors of war and urge the establishment of international courts

of arbitration. The censor allowed stories of German atrocities fanning the flames of hatred and inciting blood lust but suppressed peaceful dissent. In so doing the authorities exposed themselves to 'laughter, derision and scorn'.<sup>14</sup> After firing off a few shots about the London Banking crisis of August and turning his attention to war finance, he took a seasonal break.<sup>15</sup>

In the New Year Anstey worked to refine and expand his arguments about war and finance, but before publishing them, he came into direct conflict with Attorney General Hughes over amendments to the War Precautions Act.<sup>16</sup> The argument centred around issues of civil liberty, but the underlying division was about how the government was becoming increasingly authoritarian in its administration of war policy to the detriment of Labor's domestic concerns, especially the cost of living and profiteering. The original Act had a provision that made civilians liable to summary prosecution before a military court for offences against regulations promulgated under the Act. The amending Act, debated on the day the nation heard of the ANZAC landing, proposed to provide the option of trial by a normal civil court. Neither the original nor amending bills were brought to Caucus before being introduced in the House of Representatives.

Although the changes were designed to lessen the severity of the original Act, they became the occasion for Anstey and his small left faction to launch a sustained attack on the government, and Hughes in particular. It developed into a rhetorical slugging match between two of the parliament's heavy hitters. For Anstey, the existence of military courts in the justice system was an affront to the very liberties that had been won over the centuries, and were at the heart of what they were told the war was defending. Moreover, to what authority would the military be subject when judging civilians? That the proposed civilian court proceedings would deal with charges as summary offences deprived citizens of the right to trial by jury.

Here we have a government composed of men from the ranks of Labour, who are supposed to be members of the most radical organization on earth, to be imbued with exalted ideas of human liberty, to be keen for the preservation of human rights, and to be animated by a desire to cripple all the powers that in any way impinge on our freedom.<sup>17</sup>

He was not against the military men who had gone to risk their lives in what they believed to be the interests of their country, but those 'platform patriots' and stay-at-home military officers who would usurp civil authority under the Act. The people would be better served if the government used the extensive powers already available to act against profiteers.<sup>18</sup>

Hughes, who shared Anstey's talent for fighting oratory, replied in kind, referring to Anstey and Frank Brennan:

They see the danger of civil liberty being lost. Their minds pierce the misty past, and grope with the shadowy host of reformers who have blazed the track of liberty; but they are blind to the blood-red present. They cannot see the tens of thousands of men who die every day that civil liberty may be maintained. ... The honorable member [Anstey] does not see that militarism, which has been for ages the enemy of liberty, is today the very sword and shield by which liberty is to be maintained.<sup>19</sup>

Anstey was not in the least intimidated by Hughes' pugnacity, replying:

He [Hughes] says that if the enemy conquers civil liberty will disappear. Is civil liberty to be maintained in a community by a measure of this kind? Do we preserve civil liberty by providing ourselves with weapons against it? ... From what sprang the civil liberties of the British race, upon which we pride ourselves? ... They were born in the very blood and fibre, and were secured by the unselfish sacrifices of the great proletariat of the world. England has been made great by the struggles of the masses of the poor and obscure. It is they who made her glorious in political, religious and civil liberty. Against whom have the English working classes warred? It has not been against the Germans or against conquerors of foreign extraction, but against tyrants of their own race and creed.<sup>20</sup>

It was the parliament's duty to honour the servicemen at the front by addressing the inflated cost of food and other necessities. Above all, it was their duty to protect hard-won civil liberties. Hughes, weary of the exchange and irritated by Anstey's extravagant gesticulations concluded by dismissing Anstey as an inconsequential irritant. 'Does he think that freedom is so frail a thing that it depends solely upon his advocacy ... Freedom existed before he lived and will continue after he dies. The honorable member has, first of all, to recognize how utterly insignificant the individual is in the scheme of things.'<sup>21</sup>

After losing the vote 41 to 5, Anstey walked away in disgust, declaring that he no longer owed any allegiance to the government or the men comprising it and that the constituency of Bourke could have his resignation the following day. Recognising it as another of Anstey's dramatic rhetorical gestures, Fisher noted with a wry challenge, 'The honorable member has made his announcement to the wrong place, though.' Both of them knew that a formal letter of resignation to the Speaker of the House was required, not a declaration to his electorate.<sup>22</sup>

Although there was no changing the government's dictatorial approach on civil liberty, discontent at the declining standard of living rendered it political vulnerable. Taking the index of food and grocery prices of 1911 to be 1,000, there was a steady rise during 1914 that accelerated in 1915 from 1,235 in the first quarter to 1,364 in the second, jumping to 1,554 in the third and leveling down a little to 1,512 in the final quarter.<sup>23</sup> Wages, meanwhile, had been frozen at pre-war levels. Despite the difficulties arising from the combination of falling rural production because of drought, the military's voracious demand for supplies and the inflationary effects of an expansionary monetary policy, there was a popular view that the troubles were the work of plundering profiteers.

After the failure of referenda in 1911 and 1913 to increase Commonwealth powers to control monopolistic trusts and to facilitate greater fairness in national economic life, Fisher had promised during the 1914 campaign that a Labor government would try again. In May 1915, as the cost-of-living squeeze intensified, union delegates at the ALP Commonwealth Conference urged the Fisher government to press on with the 'prices referendum.'<sup>24</sup> Hughes introduced the Referendum Bills into the House in June and, after a stormy passage, they passed both houses and a polling day of 11 December 1915 was set down. Before then the government was persuaded that the states might be prepared to refer the powers to the Commonwealth, especially since five of the six state governments were Labor. At a conference in October the premiers undertook to refer the matter to their respective parliaments where, except for NSW, the necessary legislation bogged down in their conservative upper houses and the whole scheme lapsed in the crises of 1916.<sup>25</sup>

Anstey was not persuaded of the government's sincerity in bringing on the referendum bills in June 1915. They had by-passed the Caucus

and, on many occasions the parliament, in their decision making which was so preoccupied with war policy they excluded many of Labor's traditional concerns, such as the standard of living. The drawn-out process associated with the referendum was symptomatic of their timidity in not employing the emergency powers available to them in time of war.

On 10 June Anstey published an uncompromising article on 'A Paralysed Party'.<sup>26</sup> On 15 June 1915 he and J.H. Catts, former union leader and now Caucus secretary, moved a motion in Caucus:

That it be an instruction to the government to utilize the War powers of the Commonwealth for the protection of the civilian population against the rapacity of the cornerers of food supplies and during the period of the war do all necessary acts as if the Referendum bills had been carried.<sup>27</sup>

It provoked an occasionally acrimonious debate that continued throughout the afternoon and evening of Tuesday 15 June and for most of the following morning. Eventually, a similar but less provocatively worded motion from Frank Brennan was put and defeated 38 to 20.<sup>28</sup>

Confident that he had more support in the party than in the Caucus, Anstey promptly submitted his resignation to the Political Labor Council (PLC) Executive and issued an explicit challenge for them to confront the issue.<sup>29</sup> His friends in the Victorian Socialist Party provided him with an enthusiastic audience at the Bijou Theatre on 20 June where he roundly denounced what he saw as the Labor Party's unprincipled timidity in not attacking profiteers.

The increases in the wages have been made ineffective because the price of commodities has gone up, and in every instance where an advantage has been gained it has been snatched away by some counter stroke. And by whom? By a vast organization of capitalists, a combination of men who hold in their hands not only the instruments of production, but the very things upon which the people depend for their existence.

The Labor Party had traditionally said that when the means of production passed into the hands of the few, it was the party's duty to return control to the people. Anstey thundered:

If it does not do those things, if it does not give the people those things, then the Labor party has misled the people; it is no better than the

party which preceded it. ... It is the duty of the national government in this great crisis and under its war powers to say to the meat and sugar trusts and controllers of fodder, 'You have used your privileges in a manner inimical to the interests of the public.' There are no technical difficulties in the way; men who have the courage to act can always find ways and means.<sup>30</sup>

Because the growing strength of Anstey's challenge assumed the proportions of a full-scale factional brawl, the party was forced to respond. The Central Executive invited all available members of the federal Caucus to a special meeting on 25 June at Trades Hall. In an attempt to strengthen unity, the Trades Hall Council had passed a motion of confidence in the government the day before.<sup>31</sup> In a preliminary meeting the Central Executive decided that, although he had a point, it would be unwise to accept Anstey's resignation. It could provoke a split. When the MPs joined the meeting there was some 'plain talking on both sides' and it was acknowledged that the government could do better in its duties to the workers, but unity was paramount for most of them. Laurence Cohen, President of the PLC, asked Anstey to withdraw the resignation. Characteristically, he refused. Then, in what was probably a pre-arranged face-saving compromise, Cohen handed it back and Anstey accepted it 'amidst the cheers of those present'. The official statement was then given out that 'the trouble between Mr Anstey and the Federal Labor Party has been settled satisfactorily'.<sup>32</sup> It is doubtful, however, if anyone believed it. While there were a growing number who shared Anstey's views, there were fewer who agreed with his action. Henry Boote spoke for many when he told *Sydney Worker* readers on 24 June. 'So when the question is put to us, "Which will you have, Anstey or Unity" we hold up both hands for unity straight away.'

Anstey was not in the slightest deterred by these criticisms. On the contrary, he intensified his campaign against the government's war policy, particularly in matters of finance. Between November 1914 and March 1921 he wrote a series of articles, pamphlets and books that drew together the threads of his ideas on monopoly, finance and war. He wove them into a theory that provided the Australian labour movement with its most elaborate, radical analysis of finance capital, popularly called the 'Money Power'.

Anstey began with a series of articles in *Labor Call* beginning on 19 November 1914. They were subsequently published as a pamphlet

*War and Finance*.<sup>33</sup> In July-August 1915 he wrote a series of five articles under the collective title *The Kingdom of Shylock*.<sup>34</sup> He also launched a sustained attack on the War Loans Bill (No.1) in the House, much to the irritation of Andrew Fisher.<sup>35</sup> It was rejected. The speech was an early version of the argument he was developing in the articles. George Pearce, one of Fisher's loyal ministers, recalled a Caucus meeting where Anstey harangued them for forty-five minutes with an elaborately prepared lecture to demonstrate the folly of the government's financial policies. Fisher, who was also financially literate, simply moved on to the next agenda item without any discussion. Infuriated, Anstey swept the books he had brought with him to the floor and stormed out of the meeting.<sup>36</sup> By this stage, it was abundantly clear that he was getting nowhere in either the parliament or the Caucus. Incidentally, around this time, it was the irritation of critics like Anstey and a myriad other more serious vexations of office that persuaded Fisher his term as prime minister should end.<sup>37</sup>

Soon after the *Shylock* articles appeared, they were issued as a pamphlet with a crude anti-Semitic cartoon on the cover.<sup>38</sup> Two years later a revised and enlarged edition underwent the same process and emerged as a ninety-six page booklet.<sup>39</sup> The argument was again revised, with much of the anti-Semitism removed, and substantially extended into its final form in 1921 under the new title *Money Power*.<sup>40</sup>

His starting point for the analysis was clearly stated in the 'Preliminary' to the 1917 edition of *Shylock*. Referring to Australian Labour, he wrote:

This movement of ours talks of 'The Means of Production, Distribution and Exchange'. Of the first two we read much, hear much – upon the last we are silent in speech and policy. Yet in the modern world the last is fundamental in industry, in statecraft, and in war. It is in coping with the problems of Finance that the world has got to find its regeneration.<sup>41</sup>

The war, as he had warned from the beginning, would inflict severe, long-term financial damage in addition to the military carnage. 'This war will put a millstone of debt around the necks of the producing classes of every country. It will grind them to degrading slavery. It will make the monetary power more powerful and opulent than ever.'<sup>42</sup>

In explaining the development of the capitalist system, Anstey (and Lenin coincidentally), drew heavily on the work of under-consumptionist political economist John A Hobson, in their works. Anstey drew on *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism and Lenin Imperialism*. The war debt would not only weigh heavily on the fate of nations, but enhance the strength of finance capital within the modern capitalist system.<sup>43</sup>

The 'Money Power' is something more than Capitalism. It is its product, and yet its master. 'Capitalism', in its control of the great agencies of production, is observable and understandable. The other lurks in vaults and banking chambers, masquerading its operations in language that mystifies or dazzles. ... Modern Capitalism throws ever-increasing power into the hands of men who operate the monetary machine. These men constitute 'The Financial Oligarchy'.<sup>44</sup>

No matter who was the military victor, the 'Money Power' would win in the end, driven by ruthless avarice and callously indifferent to the suffering of its victims.

In Anstey's analysis, capitalism was not really about the structure and dynamics of the system, as its driving force came down to a darkness in the hearts of these evil men. Indeed he believed 'The class struggle will disappear with the exterminated interests of the predatory cliques'.<sup>45</sup>

Although Anstey's political instincts centred around a collective, common good, and many of his ideas were congruent with his socialist colleagues, his analysis of capitalism was not so much robustly socialist as a left populist conception of political and economic power. He could certainly speak with great passion and authority about the everyday indignities and wounds of working class life, but it was not until 1918-19, when his imagination had been captured by the Bolshevik Revolution, that he would speak of a seismic shift driven by an insurgent working class. Before then, it was more a case of a radicalised and re-energized Labor Party leading an enthused electorate to democratic political power where the agencies of the state were fashioned by parliamentary government to serve the welfare of the common people.

While Anstey was developing his populist political economy of finance capital, political and military events drew him into another series of battles with the government. Hughes, who succeeded Fisher, led Labor in a more combative style. He told Caucus that he 'felt sure

of their cordial and loyal support in the fights they had before them.<sup>46</sup> He imagined some fights would be with the likes of Anstey, who had attacked the government in September when Tom Barker, a member of the radical syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World, was arrested. Barker had published an ironic recruiting poster (later to become famous), which urged, 'To Arms! Capitalists, Parsons, Politicians, Landlords, Newspaper Editors, and Other Stay-at-home Patriots. Your Country Needs You in the Trenches! Workers, Follow Your Masters.'<sup>47</sup>

When the referendum on Commonwealth powers was withdrawn in favour of negotiation with the states, Anstey, somewhat unfairly in this case, lay the blame squarely at Hughes's door.<sup>48</sup> A week after Caucus approved Hughes's trip to London to put 'Australia's' view to the British government, Anstey issued a fusillade of abuse, distancing himself from all politicians.

It is all one great fraud, a gigantic sham, a shameful mockery, a miserable mirage; the politicians delude with false hopes all those they profess to serve. ... Nothing will be done. The fact will eventually be irresistibly pressed upon the organisations of Labor that the politicians have reached the limit of their democratic performances.<sup>49</sup>

Hughes, meanwhile, embarked on a 'Call to Arms' campaign to bolster recruiting during the two months between the announcement of the trip and his departure. Amid widespread suspicion that he was actively considering the introduction of military conscription, he left for England on 20 January 1916 and did not return until 31 July 1916.<sup>50</sup>

The battle shifted from the cost of living to conscription. Amid a mounting clamor from patriotic organisations, such as the Australian Natives' Association, for the introduction of compulsory enlistment to bolster recruiting, from about September 1915 numerous labour bodies declared themselves resolutely opposed to conscription. The Melbourne Trades Hall Council and a conference of Victorian unions took a stand in September 1915 as the Victorian Socialist Party took effective control of the No Conscription Fellowship from the pacifists. In January 1916, after some particularly belligerent statements from Hughes during his 'Call to Arms' campaign, the powerful and usually conservative Australian Workers' Union, unanimously passed an anti-conscription resolution at its Annual Convention.

The Queensland Labor-in-Politics Convention did the same in March.<sup>51</sup> Also in March, Frank Hyett, an Anstey protégé, persuaded Melbourne Trades Hall Council to set up a propaganda committee to prepare for the national union conference they were convening in May.<sup>52</sup> As attitudes among Irish Catholic Labor supporters hardened after the suppression of the Easter Rebellion in Dublin in 1916,, there was growing support for the hostile position that Anstey had adopted towards the Hughes government at the Victorian ALP Annual Conference. Anstey, representing a country branch, took an uncompromising position against censorship and profiteering. He was elected to the Central Executive from where he could continue to assail the government from within the party machine. The Conference both condemned conscription and called on all unions and party branches to actively oppose pro-conscription candidates.<sup>53</sup> The NSW Labor Conference passed a similar motion in May.<sup>54</sup>

Anstey represented the Tramways Union at the 11-12 May Interstate Trade Union Anti-Conscription Congress, where he was elected to its Executive and the drafting committee for its manifesto. John Curtin was appointed organiser and later drafted its second manifesto. Encompassing a wider range of radical opinion, the Congress traversed a good deal of territory before they settled on the terms of their opposition to conscription 'of life and labour'. They called on the government to suppress profiteering, to increase the pay and pensions for the common soldier and his family and to conscript wealth and



**William Morris Hughes, Prime Minister (1915-22) in 1919.** Australian Information Service collection, National Library of Australia, nla pic-vn4831473

incomes above £300 per annum. They also urged unions to oppose pro-conscription Labor candidates.<sup>55</sup>

In the week after the Congress, Anstey made some remarks in the parliament about the conscription of wealth during the Budget debate.<sup>56</sup> They were interpreted to mean that he might accept conscription in principle if it were applied equitably, and there is some evidence to suggest that he did consider it worth discussing during closed debate on the Anti-Conscription National Executive.<sup>57</sup> When the manifesto appeared in July, Anstey, the principal author of the text, included the unequivocal statement, 'Under no circumstances must we agree to a compromise on the question of conscription of wealth. No amount of wealth sacrifice can be accepted as a set off against the compulsory sacrifice of human life.'<sup>58</sup>

The manifesto was released on 18 July to unions and other anti-conscription groups but on 29 July military authorities raided both the Trades Hall and the *Labor Call* offices seizing all copies and charging Henkel, the printer. By this stage, aggressive enforcement of the War Precautions Act was widely practised in suppressing or censoring printed material, banning meetings and prosecuting activists.<sup>59</sup> When Hughes returned on 31 July, to be enthusiastically welcomed by 'win the war' patriots, he set about making his case about the urgent need for enhanced recruiting. Conscription was not mentioned. He was assessing his options and biding his time.

On Friday 25 August 1916, the second of a four-day Caucus meeting, Hughes 'made a complete statement on the position of Australia and the conduct of the War' and 'outlined a Policy for the government in this connection.'<sup>60</sup> At that stage hostilities escalated to a point of no return. Hughes presented an alarming account of the state of the war and the dire need for reinforcements, as evidenced by a desperate cable from Lloyd George. Opponents were both ignorant and dangerously disloyal. He asked Caucus to approve a plebiscite on the issue in October. During the meeting Anstey asked Hughes, 'will anti-conscriptionists be permitted to put their case in manifestos, dodgers or otherwise without censorship?' After some initial blather, Hughes replied, 'You will have unlimited scope to say whatever you wish subject to the laws of your country.'<sup>61</sup> Everyone knew exactly what that meant. Following a marathon series of Cabinet and Caucus meetings, by a majority of two votes, they finally agreed to hold a plebiscite.<sup>62</sup>

Thereafter Hughes moved quickly. After a closed meeting of MPs, which Anstey did not attend, where he gave his assessment of the military position, he moved on to address many of the party and union executives to make his case for conscription. When, in turn, they all rejected conscription it was clear that the Labor machine was against him and his demeanor changed dramatically to belligerent hostility. As the Labor and Anti-Conscription organisations mobilized with rallies on the Yarra Bank and in the Sydney Domain, Hughes returned to Melbourne where he introduced the Military Service Referendum Bill to the House on 13 September.

At this early stage of the campaign, Anstey was conspicuously absent from public platforms due to illness. By 20 September he had recovered sufficiently to return to attack the Bill.

I have no objection to conscription, to compulsion, I have no objection to force; I never had, either in the work of unionism or in the work of the nation. ... In a time of strife I believe there is something in the doctrine of Kennedy, the old Chartist, when he said, 'Moral suasion is all humbug; nothing convinces like a lift in the lug.' ... I do not even mind forces being sent oversea, if it is oversea we are going to find liberty, and to secure protection...<sup>63</sup>

He then cast doubt on the truth of the government's claims about the need for more reinforcements. Their mobilization would be a positive danger to the nation, by depriving Australia's primary industries of essential manpower, and encouraging 'demand for cheap labour and the importation of Asiatics'. The Bill duly passed both Houses with only a minor amendment. A distinctly loaded question was approved for submission to the people on 28 October.<sup>64</sup>

During October the campaign became increasingly strident. Anstey, for example, alleged that a boatload of Maltese who were coming as part of the normal migration process were, in fact, the very 'coloured labour' that he had warned was to be imported to breakdown wages and working conditions. In the House Anstey taunted the government with the allegation that they had betrayed the people by promising them a referendum on prices, but gave them one on conscription. Hughes charged that Anstey was directly connected to allegedly incendiary Industrial Workers of the World members.

In the lead up to the vote Anstey undertook a punishing schedule of speeches from Sydney to Hobart and several places in between. He spoke of civil liberty, of military necessity and economic survival, of cheap labour and White Australia, of plutocratic avarice and military belligerence, and, in every speech, the apostasy of William Morris Hughes.<sup>65</sup> When the 'No' vote won a national majority and in three states everyone knew what it meant politically, they were just not sure how it would be played out. Hughes confided to Keith Murdoch that, 'The Labor Party is now split into two camps and can never come together again.'<sup>66</sup> Anstey and James Scullin moved quickly to confirm it with a successful motion at the Victorian ALP Central Executive that there be no reconciliation with party conscriptionists.<sup>67</sup>

Caucus met on 14 November to consider Hughes's leadership. His critics had their say; Hughes responded, then vacated the Chair and invited supporters to follow him as he left. After Hughes and his twenty-four supporters had gone Caucus passed their no-confidence motion and resolved to call a special Commonwealth Conference on the matter.<sup>68</sup> Anstey said nothing. His views were abundantly clear to all, including his attitude to 'compulsion', which was probably why, despite his public campaign profile, he was not elected a delegate to the Special Federal Conference.

Returning to the parliamentary forum Anstey denounced Hughes at every opportunity in the period leading up to the formation of the Nationalist coalition of Hughes's National Labor and the Liberals<sup>69</sup> In a number of vituperative exchanges it became clear that Anstey's attitude to Hughes had progressed from opposition, to hostility, to contempt. In the lead-up to the 5 May 1917 election his contempt, even in the jocular satire, was obvious in speeches and the election broadsheet *Hughes and His Views*.<sup>70</sup> Anstey retained his seat but his margin was reduced from 32 to 10 per cent.

With the Hughes-led Nationalists holding 53 of the 76 seats in the House and 24 to 12 in the Senate, Labor's 1914 control of the parliament had been reversed. In May 1917 Labor was a much diminished and dispirited party.<sup>71</sup> There were also signs that Anstey's store of volatile energy was near exhaustion, except for his obsession with Hughes. A sympathetic critic, Adam McCoy, noted with regret, that Anstey appeared as 'Labour's dying volcano', as a once-great mob orator whose passion and wit could sway vast audiences, was now reduced to a corrosive bitterness. 'He has the disease of hatred, and he has it in a

concentrated, most malignant form – the hatred of one man.' In turn McCoy wrote: 'Mr Hughes believes Mr Anstey to be the most depraved, most unscrupulous emissary ever sent by the devil to waylay and injure a just man. Maybe the vision of both men is distorted. Both are certainly the worse for the rancor within their hearts.'<sup>72</sup>

There also seemed to be some rancor among his party comrades. At the party's annual conference Anstey was not re-elected to the Central Executive. In fact, there was an attempt to censure him for his purported views on conscription. E. J. Hogan 'regretted' Anstey's stated view on 'compulsion' and suggested that he was 'flirting' with conscription. In support of Hogan, E. J. Holloway recalled his argument with Anstey during the drafting of the Anti-Conscription Manifesto. It was also widely known that Anstey was still good friends with Charles McGrath who had enlisted and was serving in London. It was also common knowledge that Anstey's younger son, Daron, had volunteered for the army and been accepted. He was eventually prevailed on to defend himself which he did by arguing the same case as before, that compulsion was an inherent feature of how the labour movement operated. The only issue was the ends to which it was directed. His carping critics were roundly defeated when the matter came to a vote.<sup>73</sup>

Nevertheless, to someone who, with pen and voice, had been in the forefront of the campaign against conscription it was a demoralizing moment. He did not, however, retreat into sullen silence. He supported the workers in the 1917 New South Wales Railways Strike for expressing entirely justified discontent.<sup>74</sup> When feminist and socialist women had demonstrated against profiteering and the rising cost of living, Anstey made fun of the government for the number of policemen waiting in the basement of Parliament House 'to protect honorable members from molestation.'<sup>75</sup> In a speech at the Socialist Hall on how unionists and politicians had lost sight of 'Labour Principles' by their narrow vision on comfortable wages and conditions, Anstey irritated the Central Executive, which asked him to explain himself. Of course, he didn't.<sup>76</sup>

He was rescued from a slide into censorious sermonizing by his nemesis Hughes who promulgated a regulation under the War Precautions Act to bring on the second conscription plebiscite.<sup>77</sup> For Anstey, the combination of Hughes and conscription was like a whiff of cordite to a working class war-horse. Much as before, he was thrown into the fray as a leading anti-conscription speaker. He addressed numerous meetings where he heaped stronger abuse on Hughes than before, and

toured Tasmania with Vida Goldstein. Anstey also issued one of his broadsheets, the *Nation*, in which he rehearsed existing arguments about the necessity for reinforcements, the conscription of men but not wealth, the War Precautions Act and censorship, profiteering and the importation of coloured labour.<sup>78</sup> After a tough and vitriolic fight, conscription was defeated by a slightly larger margin and Anstey rejoiced in the squabbling among the vanquished under the headline ‘Holman, Hall and Hughes; Rat Bites Rat’, where he erroneously pronounced the demise of Hughes.<sup>79</sup> He should have known better. Hughes contrived a charade whereby he submitted his resignation to the Governor General but did not recommend a replacement, thus requiring the Governor General to re-commission him.<sup>80</sup>

When parliament resumed in January 1918, Frank Tudor moved a no-confidence motion in the Hughes government. Anstey’s contribution to the debate was one of the longest parliamentary speeches he had made for some time. As many would have expected it contained an elaboration of the government’s mismanagement and misbehavior, its sins of omission and commission, its mendacity and malice; all of which were personified in its leader. He poured scorn on the ‘Warwick egg’ incident, which had institutionalized the spy system of opening mail and tapping telephones. ‘We hear how, from a little acorn, the oak tree grows. My God! Out of a rotten egg they manufactured the Federal police force.’<sup>81</sup>

Despite his own English origins, he declared:

I would refuse to fight or to shed another drop of blood for the maintenance of an England such as has been dominated by the moneyed powers for the last fifty years, by those who have made the slums and destroyed the people. They have crushed out their souls, they have plunged them into horrible misery, and they are now throwing them into the battle lines.

Anstey added it was not a country or parliament or party that held his allegiance.

I try to be as true as I can to the class to which I belong – not because it is a class, but because it constitutes the great mass of the people. By its very numbers it constitutes the Democracy, the Demos, the great mass of the people.

It was the working class, seen in his own distinctively left populist way that commanded his emotional and intellectual loyalty. It was his attachment to this that had guided him along the difficult and sometimes lonely path he had followed since 1914. He had long since rejected the Empire. The nation, ruled by profiteers and apostate politicians, had surrendered all just claims to his loyalty. The party he helped to build had retreated in abject cowardice from its principles. All that was left was the class from which he had come, the common people.

So it is today that the hope of the world – hope of peace – comes from the rising revolutionary spirit of the people. The revolutionary movement in Russia is spreading to all the countries, and we have seen from the cables that have recently appeared that the controlling powers in Germany dread more the spread of revolutionary doctrines than they do the bayonets of the enemy.<sup>82</sup>

Not long after making this dynamic speech Anstey secretly planned to travel to Russia to see how socialism was being transformed from an abstract to a proper noun, from a political movement to a nation state. It would represent the apotheosis of Anstey’s war, the class war.

#### NOTES:

- 1 Julius Braunthal, *History of the International, 1864-1914*, London, Nelson, 1966, chapter 21.
- 2 *Argus*, 1 August 1914.
- 3 Douglas Newton, *Hell-Bent: Australia’s Leap into the Great War*, Melbourne, Scribe, 2014, p. 164.
- 4 Newton, p. 168.
- 5 *Labor Call*, 27 August 1914.
- 6 For a short survey of Anstey’s life see Peter Love, ‘Frank Anstey: From Heroic Persona to Embattled Identity’, *Labour History*, no. 87, November 2004, pp. 123-145. For a full length biography see Peter Love, *Frank Anstey: A Political Biography*, PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1990.
- 7 *Labor Call*, 2 April 1914.
- 8 The serialization of Kirkpatrick began on 23 April 1914 and Snowden’s speech appeared on 28 May.
- 9 *Labor Call*, 9 April 1914.
- 10 See article by A. W. Foster in the Melbourne *Socialist*, 23 October 1914. Geoffrey Hewitt, *A History of the Victorian Socialist Party, 1906-1932*, MA thesis, La Trobe University, 1974, p. 175; Melbourne Trades Hall Council, Minute Books, La Trobe Library, MS 7825, 26 March 1914 and 28 May 1914. David Day, *John Curtin: A Life*,

- Sydney, HarperCollinsPublishers, 1999, p. 181; Ian Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics: The Dynamics of the Labour Movement in Eastern Australia, 1900-1921*, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1965, p. 70; and Verity Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism. The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 181-4.
- 11 See, for example, *Brunswick and Coburg Star*, 14 August and 11 September 1914, and *Labor Call*, 27 August 1914.
  - 12 Australian Tramways Employees' Association (Victorian Branch), Minute books, La Trobe Library, MS 7817.
  - 13 *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 75, 14 October 1914, pp. 146-9. He was referring to the jump in reported trade union unemployment from 5.7 per cent in the second quarter of 1914 to 10.7 per cent in the third quarter. Turner, p. 72.
  - 14 *Labor Call*, 24 September 1914.
  - 15 *Labor Call*, 29 October.
  - 16 For a summary of the amendments see Geoffrey Sawer, *Australian Federal Politics and Law, 1901-1929*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1956, pp. 140-41. For discussion of the debate see Gavin Souter, *Acts of Parliament: A Narrative History of the Senate and House of Representatives, Commonwealth of Australia*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1988, pp. 141-42; L. F. Fitzhardinge, *The Little Digger, 1914-1952: William Morris Hughes: A Political Biography*, volume II, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1979, pp. 33-35; and David Day, *Andrew Fisher: Prime Minister of Australia*, Sydney, Fourth Estate, 2008, pp. 297-98.
  - 17 *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates (CPD)*, vol.76, 28 April 1915, p. 2677.
  - 18 His reading of the Commonwealth's emergency powers under the Constitution was conformed in the High Court's 1916 decision in *Farey v. Burvett*.
  - 19 *CPD*, vol. 76, 29 April 1915, pp. 2765-6.
  - 20 *CPD*, vol. 76, 29 April 1915, pp. 2769-72.
  - 21 *CPD*, vol. 76, 29 April 1915, p. 2779. The *Argus* report on 30 April described Anstey's theatrical delivery.
  - 22 The other four who voted against the Bill were Dr Maloney, King O'Malley, Frank Brennan and Charles McGrath. For the division, see *CPD*, vol. 76, 29 April 1915, p. 2779 and p. 2780 for Anstey's declaration and Fisher's repost.
  - 23 Quoted from the *Labour Report*, No. 8, p. 34 by Ian Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics*, p. 73.
  - 24 Turner, pp. 76-81.
  - 25 Sawer, pp. 143-45.
  - 26 *Labor Call*, 10 June 1915.
  - 27 Patrick Weller (ed.), *Caucus Minutes, 1901-1949: Minutes of the Meetings of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party; vol. 1, 1901-1917*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1975, p. 405.
  - 28 Weller, pp. 406-7.
  - 29 Political Labor Council of Victoria, Central Executive, minutes, 17 June 1915, p. 208 in DLP papers, La Trobe Library, MS 10389. The minutes simply note, 'A special meeting was held to consider correspondence from F. Anstey re. Federal party.' See too, *Argus*, 19 June 1915 for Anstey's direct challenge to the Executive.
  - 30 *Argus*, 21 June 1915.
  - 31 *Argus*, 25 June 1915.
  - 32 *Argus*, 26 June 1915; *Labor Call*, 1 July 1915; and PLC Executive Minutes, p. 211 which record that, in addition to the members of the Central Executive the MPs present were Senators Barnes, Blakey, Findley, McKissock and Russell along with MHRs Hannan, Ozanne, McGrath, Hampson, P.J. Moloney, Matthews, Brennan, Tudor, Dr Maloney, Fenton and Anstey.
  - 33 *Labor Call Print*, n.d. [1915].
  - 34 *Labor Call*, 15, 22 and 29 July, 5 and 12 August 1915.
  - 35 *CPD*, vols.77-78, 21 July 1915, pp. 5158-65.
  - 36 Sir George Foster Pearce, *Carpenter to Cabinet: Thirty-Seven Years of Parliament*, London, Hutchinson, 1951, p. 127.
  - 37 See Day, pp. 347-52.
  - 38 Frank Anstey, *The Kingdom of Shylock: The War Loan and the War Tax*, Melbourne, Labor Call Print, n.d. [1915].
  - 39 Frank Anstey, MP, *The Kingdom of Shylock*, (revised edition), Melbourne, Labor Call Print, 1917.
  - 40 Frank Anstey, MP, *Money Power*, Melbourne, Fraser and Jenkinson, 1921.
  - 41 Anstey, *Kingdom of Shylock*, (revised edition), p. vi. It remained in *Money Power*, pp. 9-10.
  - 42 *Labor Call*, 15 April 1915.
  - 43 For a detailed analysis of Anstey's Money Power theory see Peter Love, Frank Anstey, chapter 7.
  - 44 Anstey, *Kingdom of Shylock*, (revised edition), p. 2.
  - 45 Anstey, *Kingdom of Shylock*, p. vii.
  - 46 Weller, vol. 1, p. 427.
  - 47 Verity Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism*, p. 190.
  - 48 *CPD*, vol. 79, 11 November 1915, p. 7498.
  - 49 *Labor Call*, 18 November 1915.
  - 50 Fitzhardinge, pp. 59-60 on the 'Call to Arms' campaign and chapters iv to vii on the trip to London.
  - 51 Turner, pp. 81-101.
  - 52 *Labor Call*, 6 April 1915.
  - 53 *Labor Call*, 4 May 1916. A full report of the Conference proceedings is in the PLC Central Executive minutes, 21 April 1916, p. 287ff.
  - 54 Turner, p. 102.

- 55 Turner, pp. 102-03 and *Labor Call*, 18 May 1916. The Congress comprised delegates from five Labour Councils and ninety-seven unions, representing about half the organized workers in Australia.
- 56 *CPD.*, vol. 79, 18 May 1916, p. 8011.
- 57 Love, Frank Anstey, pp. 277-8.
- 58 Lloyd Ross, *John Curtin: A Biography*, Melbourne, Macmillan, 1977, p. 51.
- 59 Love, Frank Anstey, pp. 280-1.
- 60 Weller, vol. 1, pp. 434-5. A full account of the stormy Caucus and Cabinet meetings over this extended weekend can be found in Fitzhardinge, pp. 185-8.
- 61 Anstey to Henry Boote, editor of the *Worker* (Sydney), in Henry Boote papers, National Library of Australia MS 2070/1/73. The letter is dated 'Friday night', i.e. 25 August. The Caucus minutes do not record debate. Anstey's long letter to Boote is one of the few detailed accounts of the meeting.
- 62 Weller, vol. 1, pp. 434-5.
- 63 *CPD.*, vol.80, 20 September 1916, p.8676.
- 64 For a detailed report on the debate and the voting, see the *Age*, 22 September 1916.
- 65 See, as a sample, meetings at Port Melbourne, *Age*, 16 October 1916; Northcote, *Age*, 24 October 1916; and Melbourne Town Hall, *Age*, 25 October 1916.
- 66 Fitzhardinge, p. 213.
- 67 PLC Central Executive minutes, 3 November 1916, p. 349.
- 68 Weller, vol. 1, pp. 438-9 and pp. 484-8 for a journalist's report, Hughes's version and Frank Tudor's 'official' account.
- 69 Fitzhardinge, pp. 236-48.
- 70 Frank Anstey, *Hughes and His Views. Compiled for the Benefit of Mr Hughes by his Best Friend Frank Anstey*, Melbourne, Labor Call Print, 1917.
- 71 Much to the delight of its critics. See, for example, *Argus*, 8 May 1917.
- 72 Adam McCay in *Triad*, 10 April 1917.
- 73 *Labor Call*, 26 July 1917.
- 74 *CPD*, vol. 83, 6 September 1917, pp. 1773-6.
- 75 *CPD*, vol. 82 15 August 1917, p. 1064. For an account of the campaign see Judith Smart, 'Feminists, Food and the Fair Price: The Cost of Living Demonstrations in Melbourne, August-September 1917', *Labour History*, no. 50, May 1986, pp.113-131.
- 76 *Argus*, 1 October 1917 and PL Executive minutes, 12 October 1917, p. 518.
- 77 For a summary of the campaign see Turner, pp. 163-6 and for a longer account with Hughes at centre stage see Fitzhardinge, chapter 13.
- 78 See, for example, *Labor Call*, 22 November 1917; *Socialist*, 30 November 1917 and 7 December 1917; and *Argus*, 12 November 1917, 13 December 1917 and 14 December 1917. See too, Marilyn Lake, *A Divided Society: Tasmania during World War I*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1975, p. 127. Frank Anstey (ed.), *Nation*, Melbourne, Anti-Conscription Campaign Committee of Victoria, 3 December 1917.

- 79 *Labor Call*, 27 December 1917.
- 80 Fitzhardinge, pp. 303-05 gives a detailed account of the charade.
- 81 *CPD*, vol. 83, 17 January 1918, p. 3170.
- 82 *CPD*, vol. 83, pp. 3171-2.

## Workplace Football and Industrial Recreation in the First World War

*Peter Burke*

### **Abstract**

*The existence of workplace football, part of a wider phenomenon of industrial welfare, has been acknowledged, but little studied in Australia. This article examines the place of football teams in Victorian workplaces and how these were affected by the outbreak and continuance of World War 1. It argues that despite the patriotic pressure to end workplace football, some competitions continued under the guise of fundraising supported by companies that continued to value industrial welfare, while others were sustained due to working-class resistance to their suspension.*

By the outbreak of the First World War, workplace football was a common feature of working life. Many workers and employees of the government, factories, shops, banks and commercial offices participated in workplace teams, playing regular competitive matches against other teams or alternatively in local junior competitions against district or church teams. The interest in workplace football was entwined with the surging popularity of organised sport in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the development of employer-sponsored industrial recreation programs. However, with the outbreak of hostilities in August 1914 and the rising tide of patriotic fervour, workplace football and industrial recreation were to be re-cast, as bitter social divisions emerged over the role of male sport in war time.

Industrial recreation and workplace football were forms of industrial welfare, those paternalistic programs developed by employers as a way of staving off unionism and asserting control over their workforces in the new world of industrial capitalism.<sup>1</sup> Industrial recreation proved an especially popular form of welfarism for employers who saw that 'rational recreation' could assist the development of a healthy, focused and punctual workforce.<sup>2</sup> As Horace Perkins, President of the (Melbourne) Shopkeepers' Association, told the 1901 Royal Commission on Shops and Factories:

I have noticed that in the suburbs that the young men are always hanging about the streets in crowds when they are not engaged at work ... There are no amusements in Melbourne except billiard saloons; we have not the continental amusements, gardens and entertainments, you can drop in at. Unless a young man is studiously inclined and devotes himself to certain subjects he is apt to get into trouble.<sup>3</sup>

Perkins was one of the many employers who feared the uncontrolled leisure hours of the urban workforce but who may have welcomed organised sports as a potential antidote. To employers, workplace sport had additional potential benefits such as the development of worker loyalty to the company and a reduction in the appeal and success of trade unions in the workplace.<sup>4</sup> Employers supported organised sport in a variety of ways, including by initiating and organising teams under the strict oversight of the firm, but in other cases by sponsoring or subsidising initiatives by their employees. The level of involvement by the employers depended on factors including the types of industry and the size of the establishment.<sup>5</sup> In some cases unions were closely involved in the organisation of workplace sport. For many different classes of workers, workplace sport—and Australian football in particular—had become a regular part of their recreational lives in the years leading up to 1914 while Australia slowly adopted the characteristics of an industrial economy.

### Industrial Recreation in War Time

The outbreak of war in 1914 impacted upon all corners of Australian society. While many young and not so young men responded to the outbreak by rushing recruitment stations, other sections of society responded to the accompanying surge of patriotism by urging other – not so enthusiastic potential recruits – to enlist. Sport and sportsmen were soon targeted. On the eve of the 1915 football season, a little over six months after the declaration of war, L.A. Adamson, headmaster of Wesley College and president of the Metropolitan Amateur Football Association, delivered an intemperate speech castigating professional footballers and spectators. Adamson, the high priest of athleticism and muscular Christianity in Melbourne, abused professional footballers for not enlisting with the same enthusiasm as amateur footballers. Adamson suggested Iron Crosses for the premiers, instead of medals, and that Germans living in Victoria could assist their Fatherland by supporting professional football.<sup>6</sup> He urged patriotic Australians to stop attending

senior professional football games such as the Victorian Football League, as money paid at the gate served as an inducement to keep men away from the fighting line.<sup>7</sup> His emotional appeal resonated with a large section of the community, particularly after the heavy casualties at the Gallipoli landing.<sup>8</sup>

Adamson had ignited an emotional battle over the role of sport in wartime Melbourne, which impacted upon workplace football. Many of the employers and promoters of workplace football would have welcomed the sentiments in Adamson's widely reported address, if not its tenor. As Michael McKernan has argued, the war provoked a schism in the community between those with a 'professional' view of sport and those with an 'amateur' view of sport.<sup>9</sup> From the amateur middle-class perspective, sport had meaning insofar as it encouraged values such as loyalty, determination and team spirit. In this view, sport was a preparation for something higher and more important. The professional working-class view of sport was more pragmatic: sport meant entertainment and pleasure, an exciting break from the monotony of urban work. For adherents of the amateur ideal like Adamson, sport inculcated values that could be applied in the higher cause of Imperial advancement and defence. As the war threatened Britain, and therefore Australia's interests, all 'sportsmen' should devote themselves to the Imperial cause.

Workplace football did not feature in employers' considerations early in the war years. At the beginning of the conflict many employers had more immediate concerns. Many panicked, fearing the economic consequences of prolonged warfare and possible financial losses.<sup>10</sup> The war disrupted trade, with access to markets and sources of supply weakened by the insecurity of sea-lanes. Initially, employers preached the necessity of maintaining business as usual and 'keeping the wheels of industry turning'.<sup>11</sup> This could also include the maintenance of pre-war industrial recreation and welfare systems. Economically, employers also faced the continuing effects of severe drought.

But, unlike conditions in England, the war itself did not have a major impact upon the operation of industry. England was an advanced industrial nation, but Australia still had a quite limited industrial capacity. Once war broke out in 1914, the English economy switched to the production of munitions and other requirements for the war effort but, as Marnie Haig-Muir observes, 'most Australian

industries were not well placed to shift into large-scale war production or import-replacement industries needing complex technology and/or techniques.<sup>12</sup> Prior to the war, women had begun to move into clerical office positions and the war consolidated their entry. In some of these offices, up to half of the male workforce of eligible age enlisted, creating a workforce vacuum into which female workers were pulled.<sup>13</sup> But the war did not significantly alter the structure of the industrial workforce or the economy, although Haig-Muir judges it did help 'to create the conditions needed for the development of a recognisably modern industrial economy in Australia'.<sup>14</sup>

While economic concerns dominated employer responses to the outbreak of war many also moved early to assert their patriotism. Several large employers in Melbourne made conspicuous donations to the patriotic funds. Firms also encouraged their employees to contribute to such funds and to offer in-kind donations. Employees at Swallow and Ariell's biscuit factory were encouraged to engage in making comforts, and, at the outbreak of war, they had 'generally expressed themselves in patriotic terms and stated their willingness to contribute further if there was a necessity for doing so at a later time'.<sup>15</sup> Within days of war being declared, the company had contributed 50,000 pounds of their best cabin biscuits to the patriotic movement<sup>16</sup> and, later in the same month, donated £25 to the Belgian Relief Fund.<sup>17</sup>

Some firms quickly offered inducements to employees considering recruitment. At Swallow and Ariell, leave of absence was offered to any employees who enlisted, and promises were made to consider making up any difference between their normal pay and military pay.<sup>18</sup> The State Bank's response was not atypical. Bank officers who went to war did not lose income. Bank officers received full pay for three months after enlistment and then half-pay for the term of their enlistment.<sup>19</sup> Other banks were just as generous. The National Bank of Australasia gave enlisting staff leave of absence and also made up any loss in salary caused by enlisting.<sup>20</sup> The insurance industry was another that acted generously towards enlisted men. At the AMP Society, men who had enlisted 'were treated like Kings', receiving full pay in addition to military pay.<sup>21</sup> Other firms paid an allowance to the wife and children or occasionally the mother of the permanent employees who enlisted. Such practices were not uncommon, but they were unusual, and the



Swallow and Ariell's advertisement at the time of the Great War, source unknown

generosity of these practices became hard to sustain when it became clear that the war would not be over by Christmas.<sup>22</sup>

Following the shock of the losses at Gallipoli in 1915, and as the second full year of the war dawned, employers turned from inducements to more direct cajoling of employees to enlist. Employer organisations urged members to look closely at their own workforce and to encourage their enlistment:

They [employers] can make it their special business to learn all that is necessary about the single young men of military age and fitness in

their employ, the nature of the duties performed by them, and whether suitable temporary substitutes can be found to do the work.<sup>23</sup>

By early 1916 as allied losses mounted, and it was becoming quite apparent that there was to be no quick and decisive military victory, the patriotic and loyal sections of the community increased the pressure to maintain and improve flagging enlistment levels. William Morris ('Billy') Hughes had ascended to the prime ministership in October 1915 and had further increased the patriotic rhetoric. Employers soon adopted the advice of their representative bodies, literally, and introduced employment practices aimed at forcing young men to join up. These practices, combined with the economic downturn, caused by drought conditions at the opening of the war, created a form of economic conscription, whereby many young men of service age were compelled by financial necessity to enlist.

### **Employers and Football**

The sharp increase in patriotic intensity eventually impacted upon workplace football. Although no evidence was ever produced that sport 'trivialized the war effort or retarded recruiting', it was targeted as a major impediment.<sup>24</sup> Throughout 1915, many of the usual annual and one-off workplace football matches carried on as usual. In the eyes of employers, these informal and friendly matches did not undermine recruitment. For example, a friendly match played between Harcourt Football Club and a team of metallers working on a main road near Bendigo, carried on this tradition of providing a few hours of healthy recreation for workers who were too far from home to return, even on weekends.<sup>25</sup> However, the continuation of professional football was regarded by employers as disrespectful to those who were serving and those who had died on service,<sup>26</sup> as well as a disincentive to enlistment. Amateur football clubs were also 'frowned upon'. The Victorian Employers' Federation was one of those organisations to campaign against the continuance of football:

Of course, despite the terrible war game which is being played, this should not necessarily be the time for the "kill joy" to dominate public sports and recreations. What we really have to ask is will the continuance of the game interfere with the more effective conduct of the war from our point of view? If it keeps thousands or even hundreds of eligible young men from the ranks it certainly will and should be sternly frowned upon.<sup>27</sup>

From the beginning of the 1916 season, the pressure on football intensified. Amateur sporting bodies, in the belief that the war would be but a brief interruption, had immediately suspended operations, whereas the predominantly professional bodies which also assumed a brief war, had decided upon continuation.<sup>28</sup> The growing realisation that the war was not going to 'be over by Christmas' shifted the critics' attention to professional sport during 1915. But many employers shared the views of the patriots that the game itself could be a disincentive to enlistment and now withdrew their support for workplace football as well.

Workplace football was not just confined to the urban areas of Melbourne. Most regional centres featured examples of successful workplace football teams. One of the most prominent and successful football clubs in the Castlemaine district was the Foundry Football Club, based upon Thompsons Foundry, a prominent local employer. Because the Foundry and most other clubs in the district opted not to re-form, the Castlemaine League disbanded prior to the 1916 season.<sup>29</sup> The pressure of the patriots was telling. The only reported occasion when Foundry football jumpers were seen on the football field that season, was when a combined team of district fire brigade members borrowed them for a match against servicemen from the Broadmeadows military camp. This match was a fund-raiser and morale builder for new soldiers and, as it was not a match for premiership points, the company and local patriots supported it wholeheartedly.<sup>30</sup> There was little football played in Castlemaine and the surrounding areas during the war. One of the rare exceptions was the Senior Cadets Football Club, comprising youthful military cadets not yet old enough to enlist.<sup>31</sup>

In the eyes of patriotic employers, suspending workplace sport was a public display of their support for the war. To continue playing sport could, in their view, be interpreted as a trivialisation of the war effort. Suspending workplace sport might also remove an incentive for eligible workers to remain in the factory, shop, bank or office and avoid their patriotic duty. However, employers remained cognisant of the ongoing need for industrial recreation. A popular way of filling the void created by disbanding football was to re-direct male workers towards local rifle clubs, or even to set up workplace rifle clubs. Rifle clubs were already popular with firms in the early 1900s as a form of recreation infused with loyalist and patriotic overtones.<sup>32</sup> In response to the outbreak of war, rifle

clubs changed their focus from recreational and competition shooting to military-style training routines. The Melbourne Cricket Club's advice to sportsmen contemplating enlistment thus included encouragement to participate in rifle clubs.<sup>33</sup> In Castlemaine from the middle of 1915, rifle-club competition was 'confined to field firing practices', where, for example, competitors would dash around a field firing at targets in a simulation of battle.<sup>34</sup> While football may have only mimicked warfare, rifle clubs provided actual military training for the men and contributed to defence preparation, as well as inculcating militarist attitudes. Rifle clubs had always been promoted by representatives of middle-class amateur sport as a complementary activity for football club members. These links were, indeed, as old as football in Melbourne. In the late 1850s when Tom Wills published his celebrated letter in *Bell's Life in Victoria*, calling on cricketers to develop winter recreations to keep fit between cricket seasons, and suggesting the formation of a 'foot-ball club', he also suggested as an alternative the formation of a rifle club.<sup>35</sup>

Newly formed rifle clubs, together with military preparation and indoctrination, were observable in a number of workplaces. The Public Service Football Club did not play during the war years, although the 1914 season was played out to its planned conclusion. By April of 1915 on the eve of the new winter sports season, however, various sectors of the public service were also cancelling annual sports events and carnivals, citing the war and drought as causes, but promising a return when 'affairs are again normal'.<sup>36</sup> To replace the functions of the workplace sporting clubs in bringing together the variety of public-sector employees, clubs and activities with a more tangible benefit to the war effort were promoted. From late 1914, public service employees were explicitly encouraged to participate in the rifle club. Rifle clubs were thus promoted as an alternative to football clubs within industrial recreation programs during wartime; through them, the 'stay-at-homes' could be seen to be making more patriotic gestures to the war effort:

We, who by our responsibilities here are prevented from following their example [enlisting for military service], can in many cases respond to the desire of the Minister of Defence and join the Public Service Rifle Club and get a rudimentary training, so that we can assist in defending Australia, or if the opportunity comes, we will be the more fitted to replace the deplorable losses which are occurring in the ranks abroad.<sup>37</sup>

By the end of 1915, membership of the Public Service Rifle Club was double that of its pre-war level. Ambulance classes were also available for those of a pacifist inclination.<sup>38</sup> Company brass bands increased their activity in the cause of patriotism too. The Foundry band, for example, was active in farewelling soldiers and welcoming them home.<sup>39</sup>

Many large factories in Melbourne supported their employees' involvement in rifle clubs. In some cases, the employers provided the financial and organisational support required to establish a club. In Sunshine, the federal minister for defence and acting prime minister, Senator George Pearce, opened a new rifle range in April 1916. Local men, all employees of the huge Sunshine Harvester Works, built the range with the support of the firm. At the opening, the works owner-manager, H.V. McKay, hovered over the proceedings and introduced Senator Pearce, who praised the range and added that he was sorry more of the rank and file had not enlisted. He hoped that those who were fit would come forward to do their duty.<sup>40</sup>

The McKay family took on senior positions in their rifle club. McKay's brother, Sam, a Boer War veteran, captained the club. Shortly before the end of the war, a miniature rifle range was also opened in central Sunshine, once again with the prominent support of the McKays (Sam's wife had opened the facility by firing the first round).<sup>41</sup> Other employers involved in the establishment of rifle clubs during the war included Henry Zwar, the president of the Tanners' Association, who promoted and supported the move to establish a club in Preston.<sup>42</sup>

The war saw a growing emphasis by employers upon para-military activities and linking of company clubs to the patriotic campaign. Aside from this purpose, according to Greg Patmore, 'rifle clubs were a positive though minor element in the development of labour control cultivating a general respect for authority and fostering loyalty to managerial goals'.<sup>43</sup> Rifle Clubs had always been present in the range of activities promoted by loyal companies. In December 1909, for example, Dunlop's directors granted leave on full pay to all militia men in the company's employ who wished to attend the 'Kitchener Camp' at Seymour, and, in 1911, the firm provided a trophy valued at ten days' wages to the Dunlop Rifle Club.<sup>44</sup>

While many workplace football teams and competitions were disbanded, there were, however, some instances where employers encouraged football. Middle-class patriots distinguished between

amateur and professional forms of football, although the amateur-inclined sports and clubs were mostly keen to go into a period of recess to demonstrate their loyalty. To many patriots, it was the sight of hundreds and thousands of 'eligible' spectators following their teams' fortunes, and apparently showing more interest in the outcome of matches than the direction of the war, that was most dismaying. But, during 1915, many patriots tolerated football if freed of the 'element of a trophy or premiership', and if any gate money was donated to a patriotic cause.<sup>45</sup> Workplace football matches, held in conjunction with fundraising efforts, thus became one way that companies could display their patriotism.

Swallow and Ariell launched a football club in time for the 1915 season, before the campaign against the game had gained full intensity. Social matches between sections of the company and other local and rival factories had been a feature of company life for many years. The momentum garnered from a successful 1914 game against another biscuit factory, T.B. Guest & Co. of West Melbourne, led to entry in a local competition.<sup>46</sup> By the time news of the Gallipoli landings had reached Australia, the club had made a successful debut. But, by July, the football team had been weakened by player enlistments, and an unexpected loss that month was attributed to the fact that three of the best players were among the volunteers.<sup>47</sup> These player losses to war service reduced criticism of the team. The company also mollified those who disapproved by other conspicuous patriotic displays and support. Women employees, the 'Busy Bees', were organised by the company to prepare hampers and comfort parcels containing the firm's products for the troops, as well as to make garments for the soldiers.<sup>48</sup> The 'Busy Bees' also assisted fundraising for wounded soldiers by collecting donations at Swallow and Ariell football matches.<sup>49</sup>

Football continued to play an integral role at the firm for the duration, as annual matches between different sections continued unabated. The annual 1917 match between the tinsmiths and the rest of the workforce at Swallows showed that workplace football was still important to maintaining the firm's esprit de corps: 'The 'smiths invite the world to come along and see them settle the bakers' dough, box up the packers, and close the clerks' accounts in fine style, while the "busy bee" girls lead the cheering for the victors.'<sup>50</sup> The Red Cross collected donations from participants and spectators at the match.

Many companies trod a fine line. Businesses such as Swallow and Ariell mollified the demands of middle-class patriots by linking workplace football games to fundraising, Red Cross being conspicuous. Such football matches preserved the company's patriotic image, while meeting the need for industrial recreation. Frederick Thomas Derham, the managing director of Swallow and Ariell at this time, was a political conservative,<sup>51</sup> but also a paternalistic employer who had to balance the demands of the war effort with the need to maintain profitability and the long term survival of the firm. Certainly Swallow and Ariell even expanded operations during the war, adding various new workshops and plant equipment.<sup>52</sup> Derham was also active amongst employer organisations in the state. A major incentive for employers in sponsoring industrial welfare and recreation programs was the perceived benefit in workplace productivity through a more contented workforce. The firm maintained a large workforce, drawn mostly from the surrounding working-class community of Port Melbourne. Patriotic football matches helped to provide its workers with fitness, entertainment and leisure during the war years when many other such outlets had been wound back.

A new direction for workplace football during the war was the pioneering development of women's teams. Although it has been noted that a unique feature of Australian football 'has been the consistently large number of females who support the game in various ways',<sup>53</sup> women and girls had been conspicuous by their absence from the playing fields. This all changed in the First World War when patriotic employers encouraged the development of women's teams to provide entertainment and benefit the patriotic sections of the community.<sup>54</sup> Examples of women playing Australian football in wartime in fact proved to be the first recorded occasions of women playing the game.

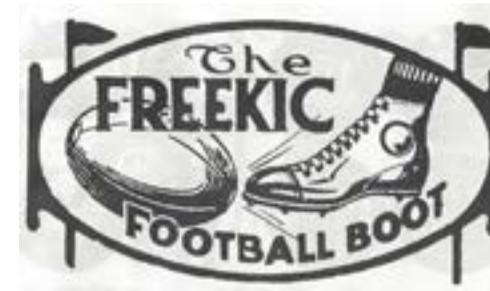
The first recorded games of Australian football involved women's teams drawn from employees of Foy and Gibson, a Melbourne-based retailer. However, the earliest games occurred under the company's Perth subsidiary during 1915. After modest beginnings, the competition expanded over the following years to involve other teams drawn from other Perth and Kalgoorlie retailers such as Boans, Economic and Bon Marche. Eventually, perhaps inspired by the example in Western Australia, some Victorian firms organised a game featuring their female employees. An exhibition match was held in Ballarat in September 1918

between the 'Khaki Girls', female employees of the South Melbourne Commonwealth Clothing Factory, and the 'Lucas Girls' from E. Lucas and Company in Ballarat. The match was held as part of a fundraising campaign for the Ballarat Avenue of Honour and Arch of Victory, which the firm of E. Lucas enthusiastically promoted. This match is the first documented example of a football match between women in Victoria.<sup>55</sup>

The ostensible reason for the Western Australian women's matches was patriotic fundraising. However, as in the rest of Australia, Western Australia experienced significant public debate over the continuation of male sport. Western Australia was also one of the most patriotic regions of Australia. In the two conscription referenda, for example, Western Australia, recorded almost 70 per cent in favour of conscription, a rate of approval that was only exceeded by Tasmania.<sup>56</sup> Employer figures associated with the department store matches in Western Australia were active in those conscription campaigns, on the 'Yes' side. In this context, the Western Australian matches can be seen as a tool in the ongoing campaign to ensure support for the war and, specifically, for 'yes' votes in the conscription referenda.

The war created the impetus for women's football matches, but these were rarely sustained. The matches in Western Australia continued postwar and represented a shift in emphasis of industrial recreation programs. The Lucas Girls performed many patriotic efforts in the war by providing comforts for and supporting servicemen. Similarly, the Khaki Girls exhibited strident support for the war and involvement in para-military activities. However, the Ballarat women's match between the Khaki Girls and the Lucas Girls in late 1918 was not repeated and did not foreshadow further matches or competitions between firms in Victoria.

The war impacted on other traditional contributions of employers to worker welfare. The sombre wartime atmosphere led many firms to cancel their annual picnics, normally a major social event in the workplace calendar. Swallow and Ariell only re-instituted their annual picnic in December 1919, a year after the cessation of hostilities.<sup>57</sup> Where company and trade picnics did take place during the war, they reinforced patriotism and whipped up pro-British and anti-German hysteria. The annual picnic of the leather trade was an example of how employers themed workplace recreation with pro-war and anti-German sentiment. At the 1916 picnic, the events included 'bomb throwing for



Football boot advertisement with a catchy name about 1914, source unknown

ladies' and a bloodthirsty 'novel sports event' called the 'Race to Berlin', where competitors were blindfolded and armed with a sword. They then walked forward and, if possible, beheaded life-sized dummies of the Kaiser and Crown Prince.<sup>58</sup>

### Worker-controlled Teams

The forms of workplace football discussed so far were distinctive in that they were largely initiated and controlled by employers. In many other cases, however, workplace football was initiated and controlled by employees. By 1914, football was entrenched in workplaces such as the railways and tramways departments. As the campaign to close the game down strengthened, and the class divide hardened in terms of attitudes to the war, union-influenced competitions persevered. In Melbourne, railway football clubs from working-class areas persisted, the Railway United Football Club from the Port Melbourne area, playing right through the war years. Indeed, this club became the *de facto* local team, once the Victorian Football Association went into recess.

Port Melbourne was one of the few Melbourne suburbs to show official dissent from the rising tide of patriotic fervour in the early months of the war. The Mayor of Port Melbourne refused local women permission to hold a patriotic meeting in late August 1914, when most embraced such gestures with great enthusiasm.<sup>59</sup> As Dale Blair has demonstrated, decisions by clubs to continue playing football was strongest in working-class areas, where patriotic sentiment was noticeably weaker and the negative vote in the conscription referenda was highest.<sup>60</sup> In Richmond, another working-class area, workplace football also persisted into 1916. Teams such as Taylor Bros, Dyasons and Rosella participated in a junior competition and attracted up to two hundred spectators at games.<sup>61</sup>

From the early stages of the war, many workers incorporated patriotic gestures into football matches as a way of appeasing the patriots, and to deflect criticism that participants were somehow 'shirkers' or unpatriotic. But this was not always the case. In July 1915, the Tramways Union arranged a mid-season match against the Police, with all proceeds to benefit the Patriotic Fund. The match was a 'frost' (abandoned), as only six tramways footballers turned up to play. The lack of enthusiasm for the fundraising match was attributed to the fact that players from the tramways were expected to 'lose work time' and pay; unlike in Tramways Football Association matches, there was no compensation for participating in the fundraising game.<sup>62</sup> Clearly, as far as these men were concerned, there were limits to patriotic charity.

Before the war, Victorian tramways employees, supported by their union, had established a flourishing football competition amongst workers from the depots dotted around metropolitan Melbourne. Hampered by a reduction in the availability of players for the 1915 season, the Tramways Football Association considered a rule change, which would have meant that players could have lined up in the finals without having played during the season. The suggestion was not implemented, reflecting a determination to continue on as before.<sup>63</sup>

By the 1916 season, the patriotic campaign against organised football was well underway and had been successful in compelling many other clubs and competitions to go into recess. This provoked a response from the union-controlled Victorian Tramway Football Association, which now canvassed the clubs and players as to their attitudes with regard to continuing the competition. Several reasons were suggested for discontinuation. They included; the 'unsettled state of affairs', the 'number of prominent players to have enlisted' and the 'public feeling which is against the continuance of sport'.<sup>64</sup> The moderate tone of the proposal is noticeable in contrast to the rhetoric contained in journals such as the *Presbyterian Messenger*, which attempted to shame both footballers and spectators.<sup>65</sup> The first point in the *Tramway Journal* was an acknowledgment of the obvious social disruption caused by the war. During this period, the union's journal was filled with announcements for, and farewells to, unionists enlisting for the war—and also featured more and more obituaries for earlier enlistees. Although the union would have preferred the continuation of the football competition, the third reason proffered for cancellation reflects the enormous weight of

public feeling against it. But unionists who might have been inclined to adopt a pragmatic line and defer to the 'public feeling' seem to have been outnumbered by those who wished to continue playing. The association continued on throughout the war years. The reasons for the decision were not articulated in the journal, but a sense is evident that a multitude of sacrifices were already being made for the war and that the closing down of football would have served little purpose, let alone have boosted recruitment.

Evidence of how other union-controlled workplace clubs responded to the patriotic campaign is thin. Most of Melbourne's daily newspapers studiously avoided mention of workplace football, unless it involved a match for a patriotic cause. But, from other sources, it appears that the tramways and railways led working-class clubs by example in the campaign to continue on with workplace competition. The continued existence of the Port Melbourne-based Railway United Football Club provides some evidence to support this contention. And, in South Australia, a railways football club was the 'chief instigator' of the 'rebel' Patriotic Football Association (PFA),<sup>66</sup> joining with other clubs to organise a breakaway competition when the South Australian Football League (SAFL) went into recess.<sup>67</sup> The railways club found allies among the predominantly working-class clubs such as Port Adelaide, West Adelaide and West Torrens, forming the PFA in the wake of the SAFL decision.<sup>68</sup> The football establishment attacked organisers of the new competition as a 'few fanatics' and as 'nobodies in the football world'.<sup>69</sup> They suggested that the 'patriotic fund business is a subterfuge' and that there was 'something more than patriotism behind the association movement'. The Port Adelaide United Patriotic Football Club instigated the formation of the PFA but, significantly, subsequent meetings were held at the Adelaide Trades Hall, headquarters for the South Australian labour movement.<sup>70</sup> The South Australian railways club disbanded after a few weeks, although the PFA persisted during the war. A police team joined it for the 1918 season, but the club withdrew without completing the season.<sup>71</sup>

The resolve of unionists to continue playing football was reinforced as the intensity of the patriotic campaign grew. Although the labour movement did not speak with one voice and was to be split asunder by the conscription campaign in 1916–17, unions were often attacked as an unpatriotic and disloyal monolith by self-proclaimed patriots.

Employers condemned the apparent lack of loyalty of unionists by recounting unfounded scuttlebutt and apocryphal stories. The Victorian Employers' Federation mouthpiece, *Liberty and Progress*, was stridently anti-union: 'One manufacturing firm in Melbourne employs about 300 hands, all good unionists no doubt, but not one has enlisted: half the clerical staff, however, has. Many sad instances could be given.'<sup>72</sup> But the reality was that unionists were conspicuous amongst enlistees throughout the war. Of the first 53,000 enlistments, 23,000 were union members, or over 43 per cent of the total.<sup>73</sup> Proportionately, the working classes contributed recruits to the military in numbers at least equal to the contribution by the middle classes.<sup>74</sup> Baseless and unfair attacks further hardened the attitude of many workers towards increasingly shrill cries for the cessation of football. This hypocrisy and class bias in the campaign against football did not go unnoticed by many working-class football supporters.<sup>75</sup>

### Conclusion

Life in cities, suburbs and regional towns of Victoria during the First World War was turned upside down by the impact of the war. Many military-aged men were drawn to the cauldron of overseas service, while at home, society was wracked by division, unrest and horror at the ever mounting toll of dead and injured. Few parts of society were left untouched and unaffected by the impact of the war. At the workplace level the war influenced relations between employers and employees and the policies and practices of employers. Employers were swept up in the patriotic fervour of the times and were often central to campaigns aimed at increasing patriotic intensity. But employers were also protective of their businesses and enterprises responded in ways during the war that reflected their interest in promoting patriotism and maintaining the success of their businesses.

Industrial welfare and recreation programs had become popular in Australia during the pre-First World War years. Employers supported these programs as it was thought they brought various benefits to the workplace including, importantly, industrial peace by increasing employee loyalty. Other benefits of welfarism included a more disciplined, healthy and sober workforce. The advent of war did not cause employers to abandon these programs but to instead to modify them to ensure that the perceived workplace benefits were still achieved while also promoting and encouraging patriotism. Workplace sports

such as football were wound back in some areas of industry and around the state, but it is also obvious that there were examples of expansion. Where workplace football expanded it seems obvious that the patriotic cause was well served. The first games of women's football were played by workplace teams during the war, and there the bold patriotic flavour of wartime workplace football was most obvious.

In some workplaces sporting teams were supplanted by rifle clubs, and again the patriotic motivation was important. Rifle clubs, with their historical associations to national defence and loyalty, absorbed more employees during the wartime, as patriots focused upon military preparation and readiness. Rifle clubs existed already in many workplaces at the outbreak of war and provided one more avenue for firms to publicly display their patriotism, while also delivering those same benefits that caused employers to originally embrace industrial recreation – a fit, disciplined and sober workforce.

The changes in workplace football and recreation during the First World War served the purpose of supporting the pro-war cause and also of helping to ensure the viability of firms during the war. But in some cases, it was sustained by force of working-class resistance to its abolition.

### NOTES:

- 1 Nikola Balnave, in her history of industrial welfarism in Australia, used, with qualification, a United States Department of Labor definition of welfarism: 'Anything for the comfort and improvement intellectual or social, of the employees, over and above wages paid, which is not a necessity of industry nor required by law'. See, Nikola Balnave, 'Industrial Welfarism in Australia 1890–1965', PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2002, p. 3.
- 2 Roger Munting, 'The Games Ethic and Industrial Capitalism before 1914: The Provision of Company Sports', *Sport in History*, vol. 23, no. 1, Summer 2003, pp. 45–67.
- 3 'Royal Commission on the Operation of the Factories and Shops Law of Victoria', *Victorian Parliamentary Papers*, 1903, vol. 2, p. 4.
- 4 Stuart Brandes, *American Welfare Capitalism 1880–1940*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1976, includes a chapter on recreation. Brandes' work is seminal in the study of industrial welfarism.
- 5 Steven Crewe, 'What about the Workers? Works-based Sport and Recreation in England c.1918 – c.1970', *Sport in History*, vol. 34, no. 4, 2014, pp. 544–68.
- 6 Dale Blair, "'The greater game': Australian Football and the Army in Melbourne and on the Front during World War I', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 11, no. 2, May 1995, p. 93.

- 7 *Argus*, 22 April 1915.
- 8 Joseph Johnson, *For the Love of the Game: A History of the Victorian Amateur Football Association*, Melbourne, Hyland House, 1992, p. 51.
- 9 Michael McKernan, 'Sport, War and Society: Australia 1914–1918', in Richard Cashman and Michael McKernan (eds), *Sport in History*, Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1979, pp. 1–27.
- 10 McKernan, p. 4.
- 11 Judith Smart, 'War and the Concept of a New Social Order: Melbourne 1914–15', PhD thesis, Monash University, 1992, p. 44.
- 12 Marnie Haig-Muir, 'The Economy at War', in Joan Beaumont (ed.), *Australia's War, 1914–1918*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1995, p. 104.
- 13 Charlie Fox, *Working Australia*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1991, p. 84.
- 14 Haig-Muir, p. 120.
- 15 *Standard*, 22 August 1914.
- 16 Swallow and Ariell, Board of Directors, Minute books, 7 August 1914, 61/35, University of Melbourne Archives.
- 17 Swallow and Ariell, Minute books, 28 August 1914.
- 18 Swallows and Ariell, Minute books, 5 March 1915.
- 19 Robert Murray and Kate White, *A Bank for the People: A History of the State Bank*, Melbourne, Hargreen, 1992, p. 184.
- 20 Geoffrey Blainey, *Gold and Paper 1858–1982: A History of the National Bank of Australasia Ltd*, Melbourne, Geoffrey Hutton, 1983, p.176.
- 21 Blainey, *Gold and Paper*, p.169.
- 22 Geoffrey Blainey, *Jumping over the Wheel: A Centenary History of Pacific Dunlop*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1993, p. 94.
- 23 *Liberty and Progress*, 25 January 1916.
- 24 Murray Phillips, 'Football, Class and War: The Rugby Codes in New South Wales 1907–1918', in John Nauright and T.J.L. Chandler (eds), *Making Men, Rugby and Masculine Identity*, London, Frank Cass, 1996, p. 169.
- 25 *Mount Alexander Mail*, 7 May 1915.
- 26 See letter published in the *Mount Alexander Mail*, 7 May 1915.
- 27 *Liberty and Progress*, 25 February 1916.
- 28 Derek Birley, 'Sportsmen and the Deadly Game', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 3, no. 3, p. 289.
- 29 *Mount Alexander Mail*, 5 May 1915.
- 30 *Mount Alexander Mail*, 6 May 1915.
- 31 *Mount Alexander Mail*, 28 April 1917.
- 32 Balnave, p. 134.
- 33 *Argus*, 11 February 1915.
- 34 *Mount Alexander Mail*, 20 July 1915.
- 35 *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 10 July 1858.
- 36 *Public Service Journal of Victoria*, 30 April 1915.
- 37 *Public Service Journal of Victoria*, 30 April 1915.
- 38 *Public Service Journal of Victoria*, 30 November 1915.
- 39 For example, see *Mount Alexander Mail* during May 1919.
- 40 Olwen Ford, *Harvester Town: The Making of Sunshine 1890–1925*, Melbourne, Sunshine and District Historical Society, 2001, p. 209.
- 41 *Footscray Advertiser*, 12 October 1918.
- 42 *Australian Leather Journal*, 15 April 1916.
- 43 Greg Patmore, 'A History of Industrial Relations in the NSW Government Railways', PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 1985, p. 42, quoted in Balnave, p. 134.
- 44 Blainey, *Jumping over the Wheel*, p. 94.
- 45 *Mount Alexander Mail*, 14 May 1915.
- 46 *Standard*, 13 June 1914.
- 47 *Standard*, 17 July 1915.
- 48 Swallow and Ariell, Minute books, 13 December 1914.
- 49 *Standard*, 29 May 1915; 13 January 1916. For a discussion of the wider role of the 'Busy Bees', see Joy Damousi, 'Marching to Different Drums: Women's Mobilisations, 1914–1939', in Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (eds), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, Sydney, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992, pp. 353–5.
- 50 *Standard*, 2 June 1917.
- 51 'Derham, Frederick Thomas (1844–1922)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/derham-frederick-thomas-3398/text5155>.
- 52 Swallow and Ariell, Board of Directors, Minute books, 12 December 1919, University of Melbourne Archives.
- 53 Rob Hess, "'Ladies are specially invited": Women in the Culture of Australian Rules Football', *International Journal of History of Sport*, vol. 17, no. 2/3, 2000, p. 133.
- 54 See Peter Burke, 'A Social History of Workplace Australian Football, 1860–1939', PhD thesis, RMIT University, 2008. See chapter six for a more detailed discussion of the phenomenon of women's football.
- 55 Rob Hess, 'Playing with "Patriotic Fire": Women and Football in the Antipodes during the Great War', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 28, no. 10, pp. 1388–408.
- 56 Bobbie Oliver, *War and Peace in Western Australia: The Social and Political Impact of the Great War 1914–1926*, Perth, University of Western Australia Press, 1995, pp. 105–06.
- 57 Swallows and Ariells, Minute books, 1914 and 1915.
- 58 *Australian Leather Journal*, 15 March 1915.
- 59 Smart, pp. 9–10.

- 60 Dale Blair, 1993, 'Will They Never Come? A Study of Professional Football in Melbourne during the War, 1914–1918'; Honours thesis, La Trobe University, p. 66.
- 61 The Rosellas and Dyasons match in July 1916 attracted 200 spectators according to the *Richmond Guardian*, 22 July 1916. No reports of the teams or competitions were found in the local newspapers for 1917 and 1918, however.
- 62 *Tramway Journal*, 30 July 1915.
- 63 See *Tramway Journal*, 13 and 27 March 1915.
- 64 *Tramway Journal*, 25 February 1916.
- 65 Blair, 'Will They Never Come?', p. 28.
- 66 Bernard Whimpress, *The South Australian Football Story*, Adelaide, South Australian National Football League 1983, p. 31. I wish to thank Bernard Whimpress for assisting with locating references to the Patriotic Football Association in South Australia.
- 67 The history of railways workers involvement in the Patriotic Football Association is not discussed in Moss's history of the South Australian labour movement. Moss's history does show, however, that the labour movement was bitterly divided over the conduct of the war and conscription campaigns. See Jim Moss, *Sound of Trumpets: History of the Labour Movement in South Australia*, Adelaide, Wakefield Press, 1985, pp. 230–56.
- 68 Blair, "'The greater game'", p. 124.
- 69 *South Australian Register*, 5 April 1916.
- 70 Michael McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, Melbourne, Nelson, 1980, p. 107.
- 71 Whimpress, p. 32.
- 72 *Liberty and Progress*, 25 June 1916.
- 73 Ernest Scott, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918, Volume XI, Australia During the War*, Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, (Facsimile Edition), 1936, pp. 659–60. The working-class enlistment was undoubtedly inflated by the prevailing poor economic conditions at the outbreak of war, and the fact that the AIF was derived from the same strata of the population that furnished recruits to the unions.
- 74 Phillips, pp. 166–7.
- 75 McKernan, *The Australian People*, p. 101.

## REVIEWS

### ***Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War***

Allen & Unwin, Sydney 2013. Pp. xxviii + 628. \$35.00, hardcover and paperback. By Joan Beaumont.

This is the best book so far published to mark the centenary of Australia's experience of the Great War, and it is hard to see how it can be excelled as a broad-based account of both the experience of the fighting forces on the battle front, and the lives, contributions and political conflicts of those on the home front. At more than 600 pages, it is not a short book, but it is written engagingly and with remarkable succinctness and clarity. Beaumont wastes no time and no words in her account. It is organised in straightforward chronological order, each chapter encompassing a year and recounting the major military events in which the Australian forces participated, as well as the patriotic work that continued alongside growing disunity, disillusion and disengagement at home. The style is measured and Beaumont is careful to include different interpretations of events, but she does not vacillate in her judgement of the overall effects of the war on Australia, summed up in her chosen title, *Broken Nation*. The 'cost of defending the values of 1914', she concludes, 'seems, by almost any calculation, to be disproportionate' (548). Apart from the loss of '[so many young men who would have made a productive contribution to post-war Australia] and the 'incalculable' 'damage to Australian social life', the public sphere was embittered and scarred by division: 'a broken nation in which the volunteer was pitted against the "shirker"; the conscriptionist against the anti-conscriptionist; and ... the Catholic against the Protestant'. And the 'insults, calumny and accusations traded in the hysteria of the war years were not forgotten—they echoed down the years' (549).

Joan Beaumont's reputation as a historian of Australian military participation in international conflicts is deservedly high and she has also previously made a significant contribution to Great War home-front history in examining the work of patriotic women. *Broken Nation*, however, marks a new level of achievement. While it incorporates a significant amount of original research using archival sources that include both official records and private letters and diaries, as well

as newspapers and other contemporary publications, its principal achievement lies in bringing together the findings of most of the major scholarly work of the past forty years in one highly readable volume and thus making them accessible to a much wider audience. In the process, Beaumont has succeeded in providing a sophisticated narrative analysis of the interconnected battle- and home-front events that framed Australians' experiences of the war.

Paying tribute to the detailed pioneering work of official war historians Charles Bean and Ernest Scott, *Broken Nation* also identifies some of the shortcomings in their accounts and shows where the critical perspectives of later generations of historians have identified omissions and suggested compelling alternative interpretations. In the case of the battle fronts, Beaumont brings to her analysis a deep understanding of traditional, critical and revisionist accounts of military leadership and strategy. This informs her admirably lucid descriptions of the battles themselves, supported by very helpful positional maps. None of this detracts, however, from the incompetence, tragedy and horror she acknowledges and describes in some of the Gallipoli attacks, and at Fromelles, First Bullecourt, and elsewhere. However, a section about 'remembering' after the description of each major battle allows her to assess changing historical interpretations and also to examine the driving political forces behind the process of memorialisation and myth-making by later generations. In the final chapter, Beaumont then judiciously assesses the mythology surrounding AIF achievements as a whole, arguing that 'the case for Australian exceptionalism has to be qualified' (517) by the lack of robust evidence of superior performance, as well as by the comparative smallness of the AIF, and the fact that it was largely an infantry force dependent on British artillery power, logistical support, technological innovation, and munitions and armaments production.

By situating her home-front analysis in each chapter between accounts of major military engagements, Beaumont reinforces the point that the war was an ever-present reality in the lives of those remaining in Australia and that its demands and effects underpinned the growing anger, division, bitterness and sense of loss that rent the new nation apart. Appropriately she focuses most of the analysis on Melbourne, as the national capital and source of much activism, although major episodes in 1917 such as the Great Strike and Hughes's confrontation

with Queensland Premier T.J. Ryan over conscription shift some of the attention to Sydney and Brisbane. The research of home-front historians such as Raymond Evans, Marilyn Lake, Bobbie Oliver, Joy Damousi, Bob Bollard and myself, all of whom have stressed class and gender conflict, bitterness and division, has been employed here to demonstrate that patriotic support for the war was contested from the beginning and further seriously weakened by the soaring cost of living, the conscription plebiscites and the strikes and food riots of 1917. Ross McMullin and Bart Ziino's work on loss and mourning has also informed the conclusions reached here about the immediate and long-term psychological and personal effects of the war on Australians. In beginning the book with a 'Prologue' outlining the war-time experiences, injuries and premature death of her own uncle, Joe Russell, Joan Beaumont sets up many of her themes. *Broken Nation* is the most comprehensive and balanced one-volume account yet published of Australia's involvement in and experience of the Great War.

*Judith Smart*

### ***Kitty's War***

University of Queensland Press, first published 2013, reprinted twice 2014, 308pp. (NSW Premiers History Award, 2013; shortlisted for the NSW State Library National Biography Award). By Janet Butler.

Readers will learn a lot from this book about 'the remarkable wartime experiences' of Kit McNaughton, and of her fellow nurses, over the course of the war from the Gallipoli campaign to the horrors of the Western Front. They will appreciate the emergence of a stronger national consciousness among the Australian nurses, confronted with the condescension of the British matrons and English manners and class distinction. They had also to contend with the conservatism of the medical profession. Gendered attitudes were common among both British and Australian doctors, reluctant to deal with nurses, preferring to deal with male orderlies. The orderlies in turn had difficulty working with nurses. The matrons had no authority over them. There were no female doctors.

Above all, we learn much about the life and work of the nurses in both theatres of the war, the challenges and discomforts with which they

had to cope, especially behind the front line in the costly and disastrous Third Battle of Ypres in the autumn of 1917. But it does not all come from Kit McNaughton's Diary. Much of all this interesting information and insight comes from different sources—other nurses' diaries and official records. And for this later intense period Kit's Diary has little to say. But it is no less significant for that. For the real subject of the book is the Diary and its author.

This is clear from the beginning. Butler does aim to provide a description of the daily life of the nurses from a range of sources together with Kit's 'own account of her time at war'. But she examines Kit's account in this wider framework, not only in what she writes, but also in her silences, with help from the insights of oral historians 'to uncover the meaning of those silences.' Her interpretation of the Diary is informed throughout by theories of understanding diaries, particularly of the diaries of women. What a diary may reveal is constrained by the imagined audience of the Diary, in Kit's case, her devout Catholic mother and family. It is also shaped by the image the diarist wishes to project of herself, within the accepted norms of a respectable middle-class woman at the time. The Diary reveals subtle changes in this self-image over time.

Over the first few months Kit writes as a tourist on an adventure to new places. She enjoys life on the ship. She resists an invitation from an officer who got fresh with her to accompany him to the top deck, reassuring her home audience that she is preserving her chastity. Later, when she is recounting 'the ripping times' she and her friends had with a group of young officers she points out that they are 'all R.C.s'. After the death of her mother in May 1916 Kit no longer makes these overt references to Catholicism. In recounting an excursion with the young officers on Lemnos, which included bathing in hot springs, she emphasises 'didn't all bathe together'.

The nurses had to put up with poor living conditions and diet on Lemnos, but they do not complain about this in their diaries. This leads Butler to point out that a woman's diary is 'not a direct, unmediated reflection of reality.' It is rather 'a woman's literary construction of herself as she negotiates the gap between society's prescriptions for her and her experience of life's realities.' To put it shortly, it is 'a point of honour not to complain.' However, Butler discerns in Kit's Diary 'the seeds of a future assertiveness, based on an increased sense of self-worth as a result of her experiences'.

Butler observes that 'descriptions of Australian wounded, particularly negative ones' find little place in Kit's Diary. This is not the case with German POWs Kit has to nurse in a British Stationary Hospital on the Somme in 1916 – Bosches Alley, she called it. She is shocked at the wounds 'such as I have never seen before'. They give her 'the creeps', especially a huge chest wound so large you could see the heart beating – 'a most awful wound'. But they do not seem to arouse compassion in her. She tells how she enjoyed cutting into a German soldier to remove a bullet from his back and later when a German dies in her care she writes, 'I have done my bit by my country as I killed a German today'. What does this say about her presentation of herself? Butler says her attitude toward the German POWs in her care was ambivalent. It became more compassionate with time and she was indignant when a doctor left a young German POW to die. In the end she was sorry to leave her 'old Huns'.

Kit's response to her experience at the Australian Casualty Clearing Station at Trios Arbres a year later is very different. Butler observes that Kit's 'absolute silence' in her account of her time at the Clearing Station 'in regard to wounded men is striking and poignant'. Others recorded their distress at what they witnessed. Alice Ross-King, who worked in the same operating theatre as Kit found it 'too awful for words'. She could no longer believe in God. The male orderly in the same theatre wrote that the suffering was 'something awful to behold'. 'Who could look, he asked, 'upon such shattered humanity and not feel it with dreadful conviction?'

Was Kit indifferent to what shocked and profoundly disturbed others? Butler interprets Kit's profound silence as evidence of 'apathy and disillusionment'. How well-founded is this explanation?

Kit may have wished that someone would marry her and take her back to Australia, but she seems to have carried out her duties more than competently for the remainder of the war, finishing in England, finally as theatre nurse for (Sir) Henry Newland, a pioneer of plastic surgery. Kit was probably the first Australian nurse to work in this new field. But she left no record of this unique experience. Her diary was finished before this appointment.

Kit seemed to have found her own way of coping with the distress of her war experience without being defeated by it. In a long entry in September 1917, in the midst of all the carnage, she rejoices in the news

that Australian soldiers had planted 'the good old flag' at Anzac Redoubt – how she would have loved to see it all. Butler sees this as Kit adopting 'the acceptable role of chronicler of deeds of patriotic glory ... The 'shattered humanity' that she sees goes against the dominant narrative of Australia's glory, a tale she privileges because she needs to believe that the terrible carnage has some purpose.'

This explanation is more persuasive and seems consistent with Kit's life after her return from the war. That life seems somewhat drab after her adventures. But Kit never forgot that she served in the war. Every Anzac Day, with no encouragement from her Irish Catholic husband, she donned her uniform and medals, went to Melbourne and marched.

Walter Phillips

### **The War that Changed Us**

Four-part DVD, ABC Shop, \$34.95. Written and directed by Don Featherstone, co-written by Clare Wright.

As historians it is our job to be constantly thinking about the past. But for the average Australian, the past is something that is, well, past. It is old, distant and not something that many people feel strongly connected to.

The way Australians connect with our war history – those events that have supposedly shaped our national identity – has been over time even more distorted and complicated. On Anzac Day we are told to remember the diggers of World War I, to grieve for our fallen ancestors who fought for our country and our way of life. We are told that those soldiers who died on the shores of Gallipoli are the embodiment of the birth of the Australian nation.

Originally a commemoration of the landing of Anzac troops at Gallipoli (a military disaster), Anzac Day itself has now come to encompass a day of recognition for the service and sacrifice of all Australians in the armed forces. Indeed, the Shrine of Remembrance website describes Anzac Day as 'the most important national day in Australia.'

The complexities of Anzac Day and its place in the formation of Australia's national identity have been debated by many historians in

many different forums and this review does not seek to add to that body of knowledge. However, it is important to note, particularly in this year of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Gallipoli landing, how pervasive and influential the Anzac legend is in shaping our general understanding of our past.

Which is why *The War that Changed Us*, a four part historical docu-drama produced for ABC by Electric Pictures, is such a refreshing take on what has become a distorted and at times oversimplified chapter of our history.

Written by historian Clare Wright and director Don Featherstone, *The War that Changed Us* follows the lives of six Australians who left detailed records of their individual wartime experiences. On the frontline we hear from Archie Barwick, a farm boy from Tasmania whose diaries are some of the best known personal accounts from World War I, Kit McNaughton, a nursing sister from Geelong who writes about her time in the Australian Army Nursing Service, and Harold 'Pompey' Elliot, whose letters to his wife Katie spare no details about the hardships of war. On the home front we follow battles of a different kind, looking at anti-war activists Tom Barker and Vida Goldstein, and pro-war campaigner Eva Hughes, through their impassioned speeches and provocative articles.

This four part series weaves together the personal accounts of these six individuals, narrated and brought to life through dramatisation, with historic film footage and expert talking heads.

The script, which draws on the records left by these six individuals, has been carefully crafted and the dramatised scenes look just like the original photographs they are no doubt inspired by. There is an art to historical re-enactments, and *The War that Changed Us* has met the challenge of setting a scene without making it appear overly contrived. Yet the audience can easily distinguish original moving footage and photographs from re-creations.

The show's most emotional ploy is its haunting original soundtrack by Melbourne band *The Orbweavers*. The clear but soulful voice of Marita Dyson tugs at the audience's heartstrings and when it is overlaid with battlefield images of dead and disfigured soldiers, it's impossible to hold back tears.

But the show doesn't just rely on old tropes to tell this history. There is a depth and intimacy to the history that informs the audience

of the complexities of the overarching story, but doesn't overwhelm them. It presents the war as an important (but not *the most* important) chapter in Australia's history, and draws the audience's attention to complicated issues that form a part of the wider story of the war, including unemployment, women's rights, class struggles and national identity. *The War that Changed Us* has a clear Australian viewpoint and aims to tell the Australian story of WWI, but to also put it into a worldwide context.

There are a plethora of historians on screen (and no doubt plenty more behind the scenes). Most are familiar faces to those in the field but not necessarily to the wider Australian public. It is impressive to see so many articulate and informative historians sharing their expertise. It takes a great deal of skill and work to become an expert historian but it takes a whole other skillset entirely to become an effective presenter. Anyone who has ever tried to turn 3000 words into 300 words and still retain the key message will understand this challenge! To turn your PhD into five or six concise and informative sound bites for a general television audience, as many of these historians have done, is no small feat. All of the historians in *The War that Changed Us* manage to do this superbly and they, along with the show's writers and directors, should be commended on a job superbly done.

Over the next four years we are going to be inundated with WWI commemorations of all kinds. The most influential of these, due to the pervasive presence of television, will be historical docu-dramas and mini-series. Historians are already doing a great job of using this anniversary as a way of re-educating the Australian public about our war history and challenging the Anzac legend. But within the mainstream media, shows such as *Anzac Girls* and *Gallipoli* will continue to appear, and if historians want to connect with the general Australian public and present more nuanced, detailed and historically accurate representations of WWI, they need to do it on all fronts – in museums, in newspapers, in public and, on television. This is why, ultimately, *The War that Changed Us* is so deserving of our praise and commendation. Not only does it present history that is accurate, well informed and analytical, but it is also interesting and entertaining. I only hope it will be re-aired so those who missed it the first time around can watch it for themselves.

Lucy Bracey

### **Khaki Crims and Desperadoes**

Pan Macmillan, Sydney 2014. Pp. 314. \$32.99, paperback. By Russell Robinson.

At one level it has all been said before. C.E.W. Bean's *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18* always surprises when revisited, for the freshness of its perspective. In his third volume, Bean wrote at length only a decade after the war about what he called 'the presence in the AIF of "hard cases" and of bad characters.' Conceding that men who drank heavily, reacted against army discipline or went absent without leave did not necessarily make bad soldiers in battle, Bean observed that the troops included 'a certain number of criminals, some of whom had entered the force with the intention of running gambling "schools" or of escaping punishment in Australia.' Many, it transpired, had no intention of reaching the firing line. Their presence became 'the cause of atrocities which occasionally blackened the name of Australia.' (p.61)

At another level Russell Robinson's pursuit of these 'khaki crims' is wonderfully original because he goes straight to the stories of the desperadoes themselves. Robinson differs in many respects from the approach of military historian Peter Stanley in his successful 2010 work *Bad Characters: Sex, Crime, Mutiny, Murder and the Australian Imperial Force*. Stanley looks at his grim material from the military perspective, presenting accounts from official files of bad behaviour by Australians in the war, and discussing the way this shaped the conduct of the war.

Robinson provides a broader social context. As a journalist with long experience of reporting on Australian criminal subcultures, he tells us the stories behind the military files – before, during and after the war. Robinson echoes Peter Stanley's disclaimer that, in the spirit of Bean, 'the finest tribute we can pay to the Australian digger is to tell his story straight'. He says his book is 'not intended to besmirch the hard-fought reputations of the honest Australian troops who laid their lives on the line.'

Even so, and despite a few tales of heroism, this is a rogues' gallery. The paradox that Robinson explores is that among the men were not a few *dishonest* Australian troops who nevertheless laid their lives on the line. The powerful story with which he ends the book tells of the Military Medal deservedly awarded at Fromelles in 1916 when – with unbelievable bravery under fire – Corporal Thomas Grogan saved the

life of Captain Blair Wark (himself later awarded the Victoria Cross for a separate episode of courage). Grogan was twice wounded on active service. Yet his post-war life became a litany of low-grade criminality and he died in obscurity. Robinson writes, 'What sort of man he actually was, and what he might have become if he had returned home able-bodied, remains unknowable.'

Several of the sixty or more 'crims' whom Robinson profiles had police records before the war. Some were simply incorrigible and should never have been allowed to enlist in the first place. Was it war experience that turned others to crime? Where do you draw the line between recklessness and heroism? Returned servicemen were not always generously treated in post-war Australia but, conversely, war service (sometimes imaginatively embellished) was often used as mitigation in court proceedings.

This is a popular not an academic text though it is ambitious and supported by extensive research into contemporary sources. A bibliography includes books and articles by historians who have worked their way through the seamy side of war and its aftermath. Robinson refers to Stanley and to social historians Hugh Anderson, Michael Cathcart and Chris McConville, but in his conclusions he is his own man. He draws heavily on the newly digitised online resources at the Australian War Memorial and the National Archives, and then revels in following these imperfect soldiers into the world beyond their military careers, pursuing their stories through newspaper and criminal files and police gazettes.

Unlike most books about the First AIF, there is a lot here about women: lovers, wives, prostitutes, criminals themselves such as 'The Kiss of Death Girl', and women left behind, double-crossed, married under false pretences, deserted. Robinson adds depth to the oft-told stories of notorious Sydney underworld figure Tilly Devine by detailing the war story of her handsome husband Big Jim Devine, in reality 'a shirker, a deserter and a man not to be trusted.' Add venereal disease to the disastrous social consequences of the Great War: the scourge figures frequently in these stories.

This is an Australia-wide canvas but Victoria gets more than a fair share of the picture. Some of the crims are familiar to us already. Squizzy Taylor avoided enlisting but his brothers joined up – one of them, Claude, deserting almost immediately. Squizzy's nemesis Snowy

Cutmore was also a military deserter, but Robinson extends his curiosity to discover the enlistment records of Snowy's dad and his brother. The Bruhn brothers, originally from Geelong, were another notorious brood.

There are many stories that have not been told before. Most touchingly, the redemptive story of George Harris occupies a chapter called 'An Unlikely Hero'. It's a tale worthy of Victor Hugo: orphaned, institutionalised and abused in childhood; bad company, wrongful imprisonment, temporary insanity, attempted murder of the prison governor, the interest of a kind-hearted woman, miraculous intervention by an enlightened politician; enlistment into the armed forces, campaigning in France, not a blot on his record, through to the last weeks of the war. 'He was killed while carrying ammunition to the guns and is buried in a little cemetery at Cerissy-Gailly on the banks of the Somme.' The book is worth reading for this story alone.

Some readers may find the lurches into tabloid vernacular grating, reminiscent of the heady days of the late Melbourne *Truth* (which is one of Robinson's sources, reasonably so). But cliché seldom mars the energetic telling. The more important yardstick is integrity, so although sensational, this is not sensationalism for its own sake. Robinson gives us insights into our social history and makes us think deeply about Australians at war and the Anzac legacy in all its dimensions, a century on. It is a fine achievement by a gifted storyteller.

Andrew Lemon

### ***Soldier Boys: The Militarisation of Australian and New Zealand Schools for World War I***

Melbourne Books, Melbourne 2014. Pp. 262. \$29.95, paperback.

By Maxwell N. Waugh.

We are now well into the vast range of events commemorating the centenary of World War I. We seem to be engulfed with grant opportunities and commemorative committees planning a myriad of activities, functions and memorials, efforts to recognise and preserve older memorials, avenues of honour, etc. We can expect to see an increasing amount of this activity in the next four years, especially in

2015 with the centenary of the Gallipoli landing. Every aspect of the war experience is likely to be examined, including a considerable emphasis on and recognition of the significance of the home front.

The RHSV decided to undertake its main commemorative activity early and to focus on the home front. In August 2014 it opened a highly successful exhibition of Red Cross activities in Victoria, which was curated in conjunction with the Red Cross and was largely funded by a grant from the local federal member, Adam Bandt. At the same time, the RHSV held a popular conference on the home front; its papers fill the pages of this edition of the *Victorian Historical Journal*.

In the past, interest in the home front has tended to be subordinate to what was happening in the theatres of war. What internal interest did exist tended to focus on the conscription debates and referenda, and the divisions in Australian politics and society that conscription both reflected and aggravated. Conscription was twice rejected and there subsequently grew up a national pride in the fact that Australia had made its great contribution to the war with a volunteer army, unlike other nations where conscription was the norm. This has been portrayed as giving a glow of Australian moral superiority, but in reality it is to something of an *ex-post-facto* justification or rationalisation. What has often been ignored is that Australia (and New Zealand) had a form of compulsory service of children and teenagers that ran from 1911 and through the war and beyond. This *de facto* conscription of the young is the focus of Max Waugh's study.

There had been voluntary cadets in many schools in the Australasian colonies in the nineteenth century. In Australia, following federation, these were reorganised in 1903 into a national scheme. However, as tensions built in Europe in the following years, there were mounting calls for universal military training and drilling of young males. In 1909 the Deakin government legislated for a compulsory cadet training scheme which began operation at the start of 1911, for all boys aged 12 to 18. Much of the training was organised through the schools and was conducted by school teachers who were appointed to be the training officers.

There were mixed responses to the scheme in the community and from the boys themselves. On the one hand, as Waugh points out, some boys were stirred by the experience and the accompanying propaganda. Through their enthusiasm this compulsory service contributed to a flow

of willing and partly trained volunteers into the AIF throughout the war. Overall, the scheme appears to have been well supported within Australian society, especially by people with political views from the centre and the right.

However, compulsory training was never uniformly supported and there was significant principled opposition, especially from the political left. There was also resistance from conscientious objectors and from those boys and teenagers for whom cadet training was of no interest or was highly inconvenient. Working boys who were required to travel long distances for drilling after work (especially in the country), found it exhausting and inconvenient. Others simply found the training requirements intrusive and distasteful. As a result, attendance was often erratic and below the required amount.

Episodically, the authorities prosecuted and even persecuted these boys, and the sometimes brutal punishment of those who refused to participate, including solitary confinement and privation, is one of the shocking exposures in the book. Another aspect that most of us would these days find shocking, and another reason for the steady flow of volunteers to the battlefields, was the level and nature of the jingoistic propaganda that was indoctrinated in children in the classrooms and training grounds of the period. Most people these days would see the diet of nationalism and militarism that was fed to the nation's children as insidious. It is hard not to be judgmental about practices and not to condemn the blatant indoctrination. The reading material in the *School Paper* and readers, and the role of teachers in presenting loaded values to children, gave a particular view of nation and war that assisted the recruiting authorities. However, as Waugh concludes, the indoctrination of girls was not so strong, and was obviously aimed at what were seen as more appropriate supportive and caring roles.

Waugh has produced a valuable contribution to our understanding of the militarisation of schools and of young people in Australia and New Zealand in the years leading up to and during the war.

*Don Garden*

## Notes on Contributors

**Peter Burke** of RMIT University recently completed a doctoral thesis on workplace football and the industrial recreation movement in Victoria during the first half of the twentieth century. He has published on this and other aspects of Australian sporting history.

**Lucy Bracey** is a professional historian and part of *Way Back When: Consulting Historians*. She is the author of several commissioned histories, including a history of the Engineering Faculty at Monash University and a thirty-year history of the Victorian AIDS Council. She loves oral history and has produced two radio programs for ABC Radio National. Lucy is also President of the Professional Historians Association of Victoria and serves on the RHSV Council. Lately, she has been curating an exhibition at the State Library of Victoria called 'Writing the War' which looks at the World War I experiences of seven key individuals through the written records they left behind.

**Don Garden** taught history at the University of Melbourne where he is now an honorary fellow. His books include a history of Victoria, a number of local histories, an environmental history of Australia and the Pacific and a study of the impact of a number of nineteenth-century El Nino events. He is president of the RHSV, president of the Federation of Australian Historical Societies and acting president of the Kew Historical Society.

**Jillian Durance** is a community historian living in South Gippsland. Her interest in the Great War was sparked in childhood by the stories her grandfather told her. Her book, *Still Going Strong: The Story of the Moyarra Honour Roll*, won the Victorian Community History Prize in 2007. Jillian's grandfather was a member of the 21st Battalion Band. This has inspired her to explore the experience of the bands at war as well as the role of the brass bands on the home front in Victoria. Of special interest is the historical, cultural, musical and personal links between them.

**John Lack** is an Associate Professor and a Principal Fellow in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne, a Fellow of the RHSV, a former editor of this journal, and a former Victorian section editor for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. He has published on Australian urban, immigration, labour, and sporting history, and is completing a study of the homefront 1914-18 in Melbourne's western suburbs.

**Peter Love** of Swinburne University wrote a political biography of Frank Anstey for his PhD at La Trobe University. He has taught Politics and History at Swinburne University of Technology and been an active member of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History for more than twenty-five years.

**Andrew Lemon** FRHSV is immediate past president of the RHSV and an independent professional historian and author of many books, particularly on Australian horse racing and on aspects of the history of Victoria. He edited the *Victorian Historical Journal* from 1990 to 1999 and is current chair of the RHSV's Membership and Events Organising Committee.

**Michael McKernan** is an historian and writer with extensive publications in Australian social and military history. He taught at the University of New South Wales and was a senior administrator at the Australian War Memorial. He has led many tours to Gallipoli and the Western Front. His most recent book was *Victoria at War* (2014).

**Ross McMullin** is an award-winning historian and biographer. He wrote the ALP centenary history *The Light on the Hill*, and another political history, *So Monstrous a Traveesty: Chris Watson and the World's First National Labour Government*. Dr McMullin's biography of a renowned Australian commander in World War I, *Pompey Elliott*, won awards for biography and literature. Another biography, *Will Dyson: Australia's Radical Genius*, was shortlisted for the National Biography Award. His most recent book, *Farewell, Dear People: Biographies of Australia's Lost Generation*, was awarded the Prime Minister's Prize for Australian History and the National Cultural Award.

**Walter Phillips** is a graduate of the University of Adelaide and the Australian National University and taught history for some thirty years at La Trobe University, retiring in December 1996. His publications have been mainly in Australian religious history, including *Defending 'a Christian Country': Churchmen and the Defence of Christianity in New South Wales in the 1880s and After* (1981) and *James Jefferis. Prophet of Federation* (1993). Since his retirement he has given several series of lectures to U3A classes, and more recently he has become immersed in the history of the Great War in preparation for a new series.

**Judith Smart** is a principal fellow at the University of Melbourne and an adjunct professor at RMIT University. She has published on Australian women's organisations in the first half of the 20th Century, as well as on the home front during World War I. She is the co-editor with Prof. Shurlee Swain of the

recently launched online encyclopedia of women and leadership in 20<sup>th</sup> century Australia, and she is currently writing, with Professor Marian Quartly, a history of the National Council of Women of Australia 1931–2006.

**Rosalie Triolo** is a senior lecturer in History/Humanities Education at Monash University. She is a life member and past president of the History Teachers' Association of Victoria and has been active in it for over three decades. She is HTAA's delegate to the Australian Historical Association, also on the council of the RHSV, and is Victoria's representative on the council of the Australian National Museum of Education. Her doctoral thesis, 'Our Schools and the War', was awarded a Monash University Mollie Holman medal and her book of the same was 'commended' in the 2012 Victorian Community History Publication Awards.

**Carole Woods** is a fellow, Council member and honorary secretary of the RHSV. A local history specialist, she has been a long-time judge of the Victorian Community History Awards. Carole was the curator of the popular exhibition 'The Australian Red Cross in the Great War' held at the RHSV in 2014. She is the author of several books including *Beechworth: a Titan's Field* and the forthcoming 'Vera Deakin and the Red Cross Enquiry Bureau'.

**Bart Ziino** is a lecturer in history at Deakin University. He has published widely on Australian experiences and commemoration of the First World War, and is currently undertaking a study of private sentiment in Australia between 1914 and 1919. He is author of *A Distant Grief: Australians, War Graves and the Great War* (UWA Press, 2007), co-editor of *The Heritage of War* (Routledge, 2012), and editor of the recently-published volume *Remembering the First World War* (2015).

## About the Royal Historical Society of Victoria

The Royal Historical Society of Victoria is a community organisation comprising people from many fields committed to collecting, researching and sharing an understanding of the history of Victoria. Founded in 1909, the Society continues the founders' vision that knowing the individual stories of past inhabitants gives present and future generations, links with local place and local community, bolstering a sense of identity and belonging, and enriching our cultural heritage.

The RHSV is located in the heritage-listed Drill Hall at 239 A'Beckett Street Melbourne built in 1939 on a site devoted to defence installations since the construction of the West Melbourne Orderly Room in 1866 for the Victorian Volunteer Corps. The 1939 building was designed to be used by the Army Medical Corps as a training and research facility. It passed into the hands of the Victorian Government, which has leased it to the Society since 1999.

The RHSV conducts lectures, exhibitions, excursions and workshops for the benefit of members and the general public. It publishes the bi-annual Victorian Historical Journal, a bi-monthly newsletter, History News, and monographs. It is committed to collecting and making accessible the history of Melbourne and Victoria. It holds a significant collection of the history of Victoria including books, manuscripts, photographs, prints and drawings, ephemera and maps. The Society's library is considered one of Australia's richest in its focus on Victorian history. Catalogues are accessible online.

The RHSV acts as the umbrella body for over 320 historical societies and actively promotes their collections throughout Victoria, which are accessible via the Victorian Local History Database identified on the RHSV website. The Society also sponsors the History Victoria Support Group, which runs quarterly meetings throughout the state to increase the skills and knowledge of historical societies. The RHSV also has an active online presence and runs the History Victoria bookshop – online and on-site.

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1. The *VHJ* is a refereed journal publishing original and previously unpublished (online and hard copy) scholarly articles on Victorian history, or on Australian history that illuminates Victorian history.
2. The submission of original scholarly articles is invited.
3. Articles from 4000 to 8000 words (including notes) are preferred.
4. The *VHJ* also publishes historical notes, generally of 2–3000 words. A historical note contains factual information and is different from an article by not being an extended analysis or having an argument. Submitted articles may be reduced and published as historical notes at the discretion of the editor and the Publications Committee, after consultation with the author.
5. The review editor(s) commission book reviews, but suggestions are welcome.
6. The RHSV does not pay for contributions to the *Journal*.
7. The manuscript should be in digital form in a minimum 12-point serif typeface, double or one-and-a-half line spaced (including indented quotations and endnotes), with margins of at least 3 cm.
8. Referencing style is endnotes and must not exceed 10% of the text. They should be devoted principally to the citation of sources.
9. The title page should include: author's name and title(s); postal address, telephone number, email address; article's word length (including notes); a 100 word biographical note on the author; a 100 word abstract of the main argument or significance of the article.
10. Suitable illustrations for articles are welcome. Initially send clear hard photocopies, not originals. Scanned images at 300dpi can be emailed or sent on disk. Further details about final images and permissions will be sent if your article is accepted.
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