

Feminism in Flux
Indigenous Rights Activism and the Evolution of
Feminism in New South Wales
1930-1960

Lara Hall

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the
degree of BA (Hons) in History

University of Sydney
October 2006

Acknowledgements

A few quick acknowledgements are definitely needed as throughout the past year I have relied so much upon the support of others, and am so lucky to have had such a strong network. Firstly I want to express my appreciation to Richard White and Michael McDonnell for broadening my outlook and reading some very poorly edited work to give me constructive criticism to help with the end product, and to my supervisor Kirsten McKenzie, for the continued advice and encouragement. ‘Race Relations and Australian Frontiers’ was the first subject in Australian history that I took and it sparked a deep interest which led me to this thesis, and for that I am so grateful. A huge thank you to Jackie Crisp for putting on your academic hat for me and providing me with so much guidance to bring my thesis together and learn how to write short(er) paragraphs!

The best outcome of this year has been in the friendships formed with an amazing group of women; through many cups of coffee, a constant stream of emails and shared crises your support has been invaluable. To Eirini, Lou, Felicity, Bec, Jules and Marina thank you for sharing this with me. We finally made it and will see the sun and change clothes more frequently!

My biggest debt of gratitude is to my parents for their boundless love and support, and for always encouraging me to follow my interests. You are wonderful and I am so lucky. And finally, thank you to Luca, for your continued patience and effort to make me smile through the stress. But mostly thank you for the pride you have in me and so clearly demonstrate which encouraged me to persevere to the end.

List of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Acknowledgements | ii |
| List of Abbreviations | iv |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Chapter One Collaborative Politics and Feminist History | 18 |
| Chapter Two The 1930s: Progress in Conservatism | 32 |
| Chapter Three The 1940s: Winning the Peace | 50 |
| Chapter Four The 1950s: A Second Wave | 69 |
| Conclusion Understanding an Ideological Act | 87 |
| Bibliography | 98 |

Abbreviations

| | |
|----------------|---|
| AAF | Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship Established 1956, Sydney |
| AFWV | Australian Federation of Women Voters Established in 1921 in Perth under the Name Australian Federation of Women's Societies for Equal Citizenship, became Australian Federation of Women Voters in 1924. |
| ALP | Australian Labor Party Established 1891, Australia's oldest political party. |
| APA | Aborigines Progressive Association Established 1937 by William Ferguson and Jack Patten, Dubbo. |
| APNR | Association for the Protection of Native Races Established 1913, Sydney. |
| AWC | Australian Woman's Charter Outcome of a national women's conference of ninety-one organizations, held in Sydney in 1943. |
| CACR | Committee for Aboriginal Citizenship Rights 1939-1943, Anglo-Australian organization with links to the APA. |
| CPA | Communist Party of Australia Established 1920, Sydney. |
| FCAATSI | Federal Committee for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders Established 1958, Adelaide. |
| NCW | National Council of Women Established 1931 as an umbrella organization for existing National Councils of Women in each state. The first of these was the National Council of Women in New South Wales in 1896. |
| UA | United Associations (of Women) Established 1930, with the amalgamation of the Women's League, Women's Voter Association, Women's Service League, Sydney. |

- UAW** Union of Australian Women
Established 1950, breakaway group from New Housewives' Association, Sydney
- UAP** United Australia Party
Established 1931 successor to the Nationalist Party of Australia as primary non-labor party. Succeeded by the Liberal Party in 1945.
- WIDF** Women's International Democratic Federation
Established 1945 at Paris Conference attended by 850 women from 41 countries

Introduction

In the foreword to the history of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI), written in 1989, R.B. Sykes commented that, ‘I was unaware that, somewhere out there, far away, there were people struggling to change my situation. Had I been aware, no doubt, I would have believed them to be all white, Christian perhaps, and motivated more by charitable concern than by desire for justice.’¹ This quote demonstrates many of the prejudices surrounding civil rights activism in Australia in the first half of the twentieth century; in particular the view that white activism was largely driven by a philanthropic approach to Indigenous rights. This thesis grapples with some of those assumptions, specifically those involving the feminist movement.

Feminist involvement in Indigenous affairs has been conceptualised within the dominant historiography as a manifestation of feminist doctrines of the 1930s. My thesis aims to extend this static notion and examine feminist activity across three decades to illustrate a radicalisation of the movement. The point of my intervention is to examine Indigenous rights, not merely as a feature of the feminist organisations at particular times, but to see what a changing interest can demonstrate about the evolution of feminism between 1930 and 1960, which sowed the seeds for the politics of female liberation in the 1970s.

¹ ‘Foreword’, in Faith Bandler, *Turning the Tide: A Personal History of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders*, (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1989), xiii.

My thesis illustrates that an interest in Aboriginal affairs became integral to the 'progressive' outlook adopted by an evolving feminist movement in Sydney between 1930 and 1960. This focus on feminist involvement in Aboriginal affairs facilitates an examination of Australian feminism's development from the conservatism of the 1930s to the roots of the politics of female liberation which became evident in the 1950s. By tracking an interest in Indigenous affairs through feminist organisations, then, it is possible to demonstrate the radicalisation of the feminist movement 'between the waves'. Feminist interest highlights the fact that involvement in Aboriginal activism transcends the philanthropic model and is a key to understanding feminist self-representation between 1930 and 1960 and the relationship feminists sought to establish with the nation-state.

In 1937 the Feminist Club of New South Wales lobbied the New South Wales Government for change to the administration of Aboriginal affairs as the Select Committee Enquiry into the administration of the Aboriginal Protection Board. The Feminist Club's actions were unique as it was the first official protest by a 'social' group. Twenty years later, in 1957, Sydney was the birth site of the Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship (AAF), the first inter-racial activist body. From a vantage point of fifty years, in the twenty-first century historians are concerned with placing women and Aborigines within the story of the Australian nation.

Situating my study of the feminist involvement in Indigenous rights within a postcolonial dialogue allows examination of the ways in which feminist groups viewed and supported Aboriginal rights; with a self-conscious aim to promote womanhood in the realms of national and international politics. In 2003 Antoinette

Burton wrote of *After the Imperial Turn*, ‘this collection signals a conviction about the need to think both with and through the nation in the shadow of colonialism and the penumbrae of postcolonialism and globalisation.’² This period and context is important because this is the genesis of inter-racial collaboration on the issue of Indigenous affairs.

My study of the politics of collaboration seeks to illuminate questions of representation which are at the very heart of the postcolonial project. I argue that Indigenous affairs became integral to feminist self-representation in the place they sought for women in the postcolonial nation. By exploring ideologies, actions and dialogue with authorities, we may begin to understand the manner in which the colonial state both reaffirmed notions of race, and how actors and institutions negotiated and challenged dominant discourses of the day to assert their character as progressive, in a radicalising feminist context.

My starting point in exploring the role of feminist organisations in Indigenous affairs was the records of the Feminist Club of New South Wales. The Club, established in 1914, aroused my interest with its early adoption of the term ‘feminist’. The first box of the Club’s records, held in the Mitchell Library, is listed as containing minute books of its executive meetings. The first book I pulled out of the tattered box, however, was entitled *Your Future Home*. Its foreword reads as follows:

The contents of this book are compiled to assist those happy brides to be in the many problems associated with wedding procedure. There are also articles on

² Antoinette Burton, ‘Introduction: On the Inadequacy and the indispensability of the nation’ in Antoinette Burton (ed.), *After the Imperial Turn*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), p.14.

various subjects which will prove informative, interesting and helpful in the establishment of a happy home.³

This certainly did not accord with feminist doctrines with which I am most familiar. As I progressed through the records of the Club, however, the complexities of feminism in that era gradually became more evident to me. Sitting beside these records of domestic concerns were indications of an emergent interest in the position of Aboriginal people in NSW. By 1930 the Club was campaigning for medical women to work amongst Aboriginal people and they believed themselves the *only* group at the time to hold such an extensive interest in Australia's Indigenous population.

The challenge for me was to reconcile what seemed to be two divergent interests; a domestic outlook and a sense of social activism. My own perceptions of a 'feminist movement' led me to assume that it would rally against the subordination of women in the institution of marriage, and that it would likely be involved in a left political coalition against racism, sexism and war. However, for most of the 1920s, the Feminist Club was led by Millicent Preston-Stanley, ardent politician of the United Australia Party (UAP), forerunner to the Liberal Party. From my own familiarity with more recent Liberal Party policies regarding Indigenous affairs, an alignment of conservative politics with Indigenous rights did not seem an easy marriage. My thesis illustrates how an alignment of Indigenous affairs with conservative politics was possible in the 1930s, but furthermore, how it developed as untenable in later decades.

³ *Your Future Home*, (Talkabout Pty. Ltd.), Feminist Club of New South Wales records (FC), Mitchell Library (ML) MS 1703/K2103.

Current understandings of the feminist movement in Australia in the mid twentieth century have been shaped, to a significant extent, by the centrality afforded two influential feminists of the period; Jessie Street and Bessie Rischbieth.⁴ Zora Simic, in a recent assessment of the period, agrees with the importance of these women and her own thesis is fashioned to illustrate this centrality.⁵ In 1966 Jessie Street published her autobiographical account of the period up until the end of the Second World War.⁶ This testimony continues to dominate contemporary narratives of Australian feminism by historians. Within her descriptions of feminism in Sydney in the 1930s and 1940s Street sets up a clear dichotomy; dividing, ‘women’s organisations into 2 groups; one, those which take a tremendous amount of time doing philanthropic work; and two, those who work for the changing social conditions.’⁷ Street situated the Feminist Club firmly in the first category.

From 1930 to 1960 feminist involvement in Indigenous rights campaigns developed from the concern of a widely recognised philanthropic feminism, with a perceived concern for Indigenous welfare, to feminist activism, which challenged the government in a more militant fashion. It is this development that I explore within this present work. I argue that Street appears to minimise the Club’s interest in Indigenous affairs when she asserted that she resigned, in 1929, from the Feminist Club because she believed that it had ‘reached the stage where it existed only for social purposes.’⁸ Street, in the 1930s, was not a pioneer of Indigenous rights. In the

⁴ Kate White, ‘Bessie Rischbieth, Jessie Street and the end of first-wave feminism in Australia’, in Margaret Bevege, Margaret James and Carmel Shute, *Worth Her Salt: Women at work in Australia*, (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1982), p.319.

⁵ Zora Simic, ‘A Hall of Selected Mirrors: Feminism, History and Identity, 1919-1969’, unpublished P.h.D. thesis, University of Sydney, 2003, p.144.

⁶ Jessie M. Street, *Truth or Repose*, (Sydney: Australasian Book Society, 1966).

⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10/11/1943.

⁸ Winifred Mitchell, *Fifty Years of Feminist Achievement: A History of the United Associations of Women*, (U.A.W.: Sydney, 1979), p.6.

1930s, the Feminist Club, derided by Street as a charitable organisation, provided a strong platform for the Indigenous rights campaign. In 1957, Street, then prominent activist, socialist and pacifist, took a leadership role in that campaign. I look at feminist interest in Indigenous affairs in NSW to challenge the assumptions emerging from Street's centrality which are that in the 1930s a 'philanthropic' outlook negated an interest in social concerns. In asserting a development of feminist interest in Indigenous affairs from philanthropic to activist feminism, I seek to look at how this engages with feminist identity and national character.

Feminist involvement in Indigenous affairs was characterised by Lake as falling directly within white feminist doctrines of the 1930s.⁹ This sentiment is echoed by Victoria Haskins who asserted that the maternalism extended towards Aboriginal women mirrored the relationship between mistress and servant.¹⁰ Lake devotes one chapter of *Getting Equal* to exploring female activism in Indigenous rights which exclusively concentrates upon the 1930s. She ends this chapter with Constance Cooke's speech at the AFWV conference in 1936, which called for citizenship rights to be extended to Indigenous peoples, 'Cooke's call for 'equality' for Aboriginal women rather than their 'protection' represented a historic shift in the relationship between feminists and their 'dark sisters', whose interests they strove so earnestly to represent.'¹¹ This 'historical shift', however, has been left relatively unexplored. The development of feminism from the maternalism of the 1930s to the 1950s, which Lesley Johnson describes as the pre-history of female liberation, where

⁹ Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism*, (Allen and Unwin: Sydney, 1999), p.116.

¹⁰ Victoria K. Haskins, *One Bright Spot*, (Palgrave Macmillian: New York, 2005), p.179.

¹¹ Lake, *Getting Equal*, pp.134-5.

women embraced an identity seeking to speak with their own voices,¹² and the place of Indigenous affairs therein likewise remains unexplored.

There is also a surprising absence of any specific study of feminist organisations' involvement in Aboriginal affairs, despite extensive scholarship on the topic of inter-racial collaborative politics. Marilyn Lake asserts that feminist engagement in Aboriginal reform highlights the complexity in the relationship between feminism, imperialism and nationalism.¹³ Feminism in Australia has always been assessed in regard to its relationship to nationalism as feminist action regarding citizenship rights emerged with the formation of the nation at federation.¹⁴ In looking specifically at the context of NSW, however, I examine the manner in which Indigenous rights can be placed within an evolving domestic feminist movement, where questions of nationalism were engaged in a local context.

The site of Indigenous activism provides an opportunity to explore the character of feminism in NSW and a dialogue of radicalisation between the two movements. My study is not advancing a new area of historical interest, as white female involvement in Indigenous affairs has become prominent in feminist scholarship, as evidenced by the writing of Fiona Paisley, Marilyn Lake and Alison Holland amongst others. My specific focus is the institutional involvement in

¹² Lesely Johnson, 'Narratives of Feminism: The 1950s reconsidered', in Patricia Grimshaw, Ruth Fincer and Marion Campbell (eds.), *Studies in Gender: Essays in Honour of Norma Grieve*, (Victoria: Committee for Gender Studies, University of Melbourne, 1992), p.98-9.

¹³ Marilyn Lake, 'Feminism and the Gendered Politics of Antiracism, Australia 1927-1957: From Maternal Protectionism to Leftist Assimilationism', *Australian Historical Studies* 110, p.97.

¹⁴ see for example, Susan Sheridan, *Along the Faultlines: Race and Nation in Australian Women's writing, 1880s-1930s*, (N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 1995), p.72, and Kay Ferres, 'Introduction: In the shadow of the nineties: Women and Writing in Australia, 1890-1930', in Kay Ferres (ed.), *The Time to Write: Australian Women Writers, 1890-1930*, (Victoria: Penguin, 1993), p.6.

Indigenous affairs in NSW using the issue of involvement in Indigenous activism to explore the nature of feminism over three decades.

Indigenous Activism and Feminism in New South Wales

New South Wales was differentiated from other states and territories by the situation of its Aboriginal population and the character of the rights campaign. The site of community action has been largely overlooked in a study of Indigenous rights campaigns. In the 1998 Frank Archibald memorial lecture, Pat O'Shane commented, 'it continues to be the situation today that Aboriginal campaigns tend to have a local character, although the many communities have at the core of their demands the same concerns.'¹⁵

The Committee for Aboriginal Citizenship Rights (CACR), an Anglo-Australian body associated with the Aborigines Protection Association (APA) asserted the distinct nature of Aboriginal people in New South Wales. The CACR committee meeting of 18 October 1939 asserted the need 'to keep the problem of the full bloods in Northern Territory and other parts of Australia separate from the problem of the detribalised and civilised aborigines in the state of N S Wales.'¹⁶ Caroline Kelly similarly noted that 'segregation, which is desirable in Arnhem Land, is impractical in New South Wales, where the old tribal life has long since broken down.'¹⁷ When the President of the Housewives' Progressive Association, Portia Greach, suggested that Aborigines 'might like huge reserves on which they could live

¹⁵ Pat O'Shane, *Aboriginal Political Movements: Some Observations*, Frank Archibald Memorial Lecture, The 1998 Lecture Series, (University of New England, 1998), p.104.

¹⁶ Joan Kinglsey-Strack Papers (JKS), National Library of Australia (NLA) MS 9661, box 11.

¹⁷ Caroline T. Kelly, 'Native Administration: Problem of the Aboriginal Danger of Generalisation', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31/12/1938.

more or less in their former style,' Pearl Gibbs, herself designated a 'quarter caste'¹⁸ Aboriginal woman, like 9,000 Aborigines in NSW, asked the question, 'what about the half-castes and quarter-castes, who have not yet been brought up according to the methods of the whites? I myself could not live as the Aborigines did in the old days.'¹⁹ The focus of Indigenous activism was not, therefore, on civilising tribal Aborigines and on questions of basic welfare, but looked to challenge the Aboriginal Protection Board, their system of indentured apprenticeships and engage in questions of civil rights.

Organisations for Aboriginal rights were established in Sydney in the 1920s and developed momentum throughout the 1930s to raise white public interest. Notable among them was the Australian Aborigines Progressive Association which was led by Frank Maynard and active in Sydney from about 1924 to 1927.²⁰ The reason for its break-up is unknown, however, in June 1937 William Ferguson launched an organisation with the same name in Dubbo, in order to protest against the extended powers of the Aboriginal Protection Board. Following amendments to the Aboriginal Protection Act in 1936, 'lighter caste' Aborigines were brought under the act and 'protection' meant enforced concentration on reserves.²¹ The APA, an 'organisation of intelligent and educated Aborigines', campaigned for democratic rights. It believed this to be a modest request after one hundred and fifty years of

¹⁸ The designation of the proportion of Aboriginal blood was a distinguishing term of the middle of the twentieth century. Jackie Huggins asserts that 'Biological racist definitions such as "half caste" and "quarter caste" and "part-Aboriginal" have widely been used by non-Aborigines as a divide and rule tactic to insist that these groups are not "full-blooded" and that their "white" blood is the only acceptable part that they can deal with,' in Jackie Huggins, ' "Firing On in the Mind": Aboriginal Women Domestic Servants in the Inter-War Years', *Hecate* 13, 2(1987/8), p.18.

¹⁹ 'Treatment of Aborigines': Mrs Pearl Gibbs outburst, Address to Housewives', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12/2/1938.

²⁰ Jack Horner, *Vote Ferguson for Aboriginal Freedom*, (Sydney: Australia and New Zealand Book Company, 1974), p.27.

²¹ Heather Goodall, 'New South Wales', in Ann McGrath (ed.), *Contested Ground: Australian Aborigines under the British Crown*, (N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 1995), pp.59-60.

colonisation.²² In 1938, the sesqui-centenary of Federation, the APA declared Australia Day a ‘Day of Mourning’, to draw attention to Indigenous disadvantage. Two days later Prime Minister Lyons received a deputation from the APA to listen to their complaints. From 1938 a greater mutual concern between black and white Australians was visible.

Just as Indigenous rights campaigns in NSW deserve a specific local analysis, so too does the character of feminism in NSW. Sydney became the site of prominent feminist activity from the 1930s. The movement gained impetus from the publicity afforded to Jessie Street. Her public profile came primarily from her involvement in the Australian Labor Party (ALP), for whom she stood for the seat of Wentworth in 1943, and her participation in the delegation to San Francisco to draft the charter of the United Nations. Street’s influence in the feminist movement, the Australian political scene and international affairs out-stripped that of her ‘rival’ Bessie Rischbieth, President of the Australian Federation of Women Voters (AFWV). Street caused a split in the Sydney feminist movement in 1930, when the Feminist Club of NSW refused to join her new organisation, the United Associations of Women (UA). Members of the UA saw themselves as breaking the model of domestic femininity, as evidenced in their song ‘Wild Wild Women’:

Once I was happy and was a good wife,
I joined the United to learn about life,
I met with a gal and she said ‘Come with me,
We’ll work day and night to gain equality.’

Jessie Street and meetings and wild, wild Women,
They drive you crazy, they drive you insane,
Market Street and Charters and wild, wild, Women,
You get nicely finished, then you start off again.²³

²² William Ferguson to Premier A. Mair, March 11, 1940, JKS, NLA MS 9661, box 11.

²³ United Associations of Women, ‘Wild Wild Women’, reproduced in Marilyn Lake, and Katie Holmes (ed.), *Freedom Bound II*, (N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 1995), p.99.

The Australian Woman's Charter Conference, which took place on 19-22 November 1943, was an initiative of Street. Ninety one women's organisations were represented, sixty eight of which were from New South Wales.²⁴ This conference is heralded as the pinnacle of the feminist movement in Australia, uniting women of the centre and the left.²⁵

Women's Groups and Self-Representation

The development from philanthropy to activism in feminist campaigns for Indigenous rights involves a shift in feminist perception of the capacity of their organisations to influence the public political sphere. To examine this conceptual shift in feminist involvement in Indigenous affairs I use primarily the official reports, archival material and publications of feminist organisations in Sydney. The minute books and financial records are kept meticulously, and the constitution upheld unflinching. Members were admonished for any breach of protocol. All organisations kept newspaper cuttings in order to keep abreast of current affairs. There were numerous women's organisations in the 1930s, and two national bodies, the National Council of Women (NCW) and the AFWV. Lake differentiates the two organisations, commenting the NCW represented professional women, while the AFWV were concerned with the feminist aim of equality of citizenship.²⁶ Due to its feminist credentials I initially examine the organisations in Sydney that were affiliated with the

²⁴ Mitchell, *Fifty Years of Feminist Achievement*, p.35.

²⁵ See, Simic, 'A Hall of Selected Mirrors', p.110, and Peter Sekules, *Jessie Street: A Rewarding but Unrewarded Life*, (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1978), p.111.

²⁶ Lake, *Getting Equal*, p.160.

AFWV. In the 1930s the most prominent of these were the Feminist Club and the UA.

The records of feminist organisations demonstrate the official and efficient image that women tried to project into the public sphere. Angela Woollacott utilised official reports ‘as a form of representation, in order to look for women’s construction of their authority and their subjectivity.’²⁷ Her main emphasis was on self-representation, a notion that is useful when looking at official reports of feminist organisations. Anthropologist Olive Pink’s arguments for Indigenous welfare were dismissed for being ‘emotionally expressed’. Julie Marcus asserted that ‘Olive Pink accepted that her approach was sometimes emotional, but saw it as a “driving force”.’²⁸ The records of women’s organisations illustrate, however, that they did not embrace such ‘feminine characteristics’, but sought to represent themselves as efficient, organised and rational.

Women in Australia gained suffrage at the federal level in 1901 and in New South Wales in 1908, however, no woman was elected to Federal Parliament until 1943. The absence of women in the higher echelons of government and the difficulties of promoting female action at the political level was a reason behind formation of women’s groups. This is evident in the Feminist Club’s manifesto:

Feminism proclaims that Humanity is dual, that the life of the future belongs to Man and Woman...believing only through the effective womanhood of the Nations can the human race wisely and wholly fulfil the great task to which

²⁷ Angela Woollacott, ‘The Fragmentary Subject: Feminist History, Official Records, and Self-Representation’, *Women’s Studies International Forum* 21, 4(1998), p.330.

²⁸ Julie Marcus, *First in their Field: Women and Australian Anthropology*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1993), pp.126-7.

this generation is called, namely the reconstruction of our National and International life in accordance with a new and lofty ethic.²⁹

Feminist organisations sought to embody a role for women which would contribute to the national ethos. The records of the organisations illuminate the manner in which women sought to represent themselves to the broader public, and further their ability for organisational activity.

The 1930s is the starting point of my thesis due to the extent of feminist involvement in Indigenous affairs at the time and because the era is perceived, by feminist historians, as the beginning of a larger female cultural influence. Feminists in the 1930s held an ‘unprecedented interest in the “Aboriginal question”’.³⁰ In the 1930s women are accredited with having ‘feminised’ Australian culture. Lake asserts that the aim of the early women’s movement was to dethrone the predominance of masculinity in Australian culture.³¹ Yet, not only does Lake assert that the feminist movement emphasised temperance and sexual restraint, but that by the late 1920s it had gained prominence and ‘the culture had been, to a degree “feminised”’.³² With a growing feminist influence it is important to look at where women sought to use any sway they held. If women thus pioneered a ‘feminised’ culture, how did they work to extend their culturally-based influence into the public political arena? Pioneering Indigenous rights, women’s organisations took a view of a tolerant national ethos and sought specific change to legislation. This is the key to my study as the relationship of feminist organisations to the nation changed over the three decades from the 1930s.

²⁹ Undapted pamphlet, FC, ML MS 1703/K2103.

³⁰ Fiona Paisley, ‘Federalising the Aborigines? Constitutional Reform in the late 1920s’, *Australian Historical Studies*, 11, 1998, pp.248-9.

³¹ Marilyn Lake, ‘The Politics of Respectability: Identifying the Masculinist Context’, *Historical Studies*, vol. 22, no.86, April 1986, p.127.

³² Lake, ‘The Politics of Respectability’, p.130.

A platform of Indigenous rights, by its very nature, always challenged the shape of the nation as Indigenous people were outside the ‘imagined community.’³³ With a platform of Aboriginal rights feminist modes of politics gradually began to challenge the nation in more profound ways.

Feminist Scholarship

Political influence is sought not only by feminist organisations but also by scholars of feminism. My interest in feminist involvement in Indigenous affairs is shaped by questions I seek to ask of an Australian national identity in the present and the scope for women’s role within it. This sense of praxis is evident in the writing of post-structuralist feminist historians such as Joan Scott and Gail Reekie. Scott, at the outset of *Gender and the Politics of History*, explores the role of history in the construction of gender in the present. Establishing the inherent political nature of feminist history, which seeks amelioration of the position of women in the present through the critical examination of historical representation, she includes feminism in the wider framework of politically conscious histories of minorities. Scott asserted, ‘it is a motive, moreover, that feminists share with those concerned to change the representation of other groups left out of history because of race, ethnicity and class as well as gender.’³⁴

³³ The phrase ‘imagined community’ was coined by Benedict Anderson to describe the nation state as a constructed entity. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1983).

³⁴ Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p.4.

In a similar vein Reekie writes that ‘feminist scholarship can begin to focus on the dynamic relationship between culture and the discursive practice of history.’³⁵ Such comments illuminate the manner in which feminist scholarship engages with the present by recognising the influence historical practice has upon contemporary culture. This cultural influence relates to questions of national identity. My study is circumscribed by a sense of despair at the current apathy in Australian politics towards Indigenous affairs, and situated in the context of a revision of feminist scholarship which has given greater emphasis to pre-1970s feminism. New questions as to the manner in which feminist history has undertaken the representation of race can surely be asked.

The following chapters address feminist engagement with the nation, an involvement in Indigenous affairs, and the ways in which feminists thought about themselves and their goals, to illustrate the radicalisation of feminist politics between 1930 and 1960. In chapter one I contextualise my study in relation to feminist historiography to establish the importance of an examination of institutional involvement. My thesis covers three decades and each of these is the focus of the subsequent chapters, where the stages of feminist development are outlined and examined.

Chapter two, then, examines the Feminist Club of New South Wales and the United Associations of Women in the 1930s. The involvement of the Feminist Club in Indigenous Affairs outstripped that of the UA, which illustrates that progressive politics in the 1930s could be carried out by an organisation with a conservative

³⁵ Gail Reekie, ‘Feminist History After Foucault’, in Clare O’Farell (ed.), *Foucault: The Legacy*, (Queensland: Queensland University of Technology, 1997), p.303.

political outlook. However, the Feminist Club ceased to challenge national politics after the advent of the Second World War. The concern for Indigenous rights disappeared in the face of pressure to adhere to government policies in the context of a national crisis. It became a greater concern for the UA as they developed a vision to shape the nation in peace time.

Chapter three illustrates the divide in the feminist movement and the development of the Australian Women Charter Conference which became associated with left-wing politics through an interest in the peace movement and workers rights. Indigenous rights were integral to its vision of new national priorities and an area to demonstrate women's capacity for involvement in national politics. This continued into the 1950s, which is demonstrated in chapter four. In the 1950s the formation of the Union of Australian Women (UAW) forged a feminist identity with a socialist vision. The UAW tempered a socialist outlook through activism with emphasised 'respectability'. The UAW's engagement with the AAF was a catalyst for the recognition of Indigenous self-determination. However, with a vision of female unity within feminist politics, Indigenous women were categorised by their gender rather than their race.

In summary, this thesis utilises organisational feminist involvement in Indigenous affairs to illustrate the evolution of feminism in NSW between 1930 and 1960. I assert that the organisations involved in Indigenous affairs were, in their time, progressive. By this term I mean they challenged the shape of the nation and sought to push the boundaries of female involvement in the public political realm. The way that this challenge was pursued by the feminist movement changed over three decades

from a conservative approach to a left-wing initiative. Tracing the journey of feminist interest in Indigenous affairs over that period demonstrates this radicalisation

Chapter One: Collaborative Politics and Feminist History

'Those of us who have acquired education have been taught that democracy has a Christian basis, on moral standards of honesty, unselfishness, and love. We claim that these standards of democracy do not apply where aborigines are concerned.'

Pearl Gibbs¹

It is easy to establish a long history of white female involvement in Indigenous affairs through an examination of the historical work on the topic. This chapter firstly looks at the scholarship already undertaken in feminist involvement in campaigns for Indigenous rights from the 1930s to establish a framework that allows me to situate my study within the broader national context. Secondly, I examine recent feminist historiography which has created an alternative narrative of Australian nationhood, where 'Australian feminists were self-conscious nation-builders.'² This chapter demonstrates the way in which contemporary feminist historiography illustrates the importance of feminism 'between the waves' for our understanding of later feminist movements; and has amplified women's influence upon the Australian nation.

Despite the level of attention paid to women's involvement in Indigenous affairs by scholars, this work has not, in any significant way, sought to look at this subject within the broadened horizons of this new historiography. My thesis engages with feminist historiography and contributes an innovative perspective on how the study of feminist organisations is pertinent to a national feminist history. My study does this by outlining the ways in which an interest in the evolution of the feminist movement for the antecedents of later developments demonstrates the way that women sought to shape the nation. A study of the involvement of feminist organisations in Aboriginal affairs illustrates how feminism developed in relation to

¹ 'Aborigines Rights', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19/08/1949.

² Lake, *Getting Equal*, p.51.

its sense of national responsibility from 1930 to 1960, and how feminist organisations of the day reflect a strong female voice seeking contribution to the nation.

Inter-racial collaboration in Indigenous rights campaigns between 1930 and 1960 is important because it laid the ground for the successful campaign to alter the referendum in 1967.³ Jack Horner, an executive member of the AAF and later FCAATSI, asserted that inter-racial collaboration in the campaign for Indigenous rights in this period was necessary as ‘the era of self-determination had not yet begun.’⁴ Collaboration across racial lines included collaboration between women that received little attention. Pearl Gibbs viewed her position in the campaign for Aboriginal citizenship to be circumscribed by a dual identity, constructed by both race and gender. In 1938 Gibbs asserted, ‘we Aboriginal women are intelligent enough to ask for the same citizenship rights and conditions of life as our white sisters.’⁵ An awareness of her own positionality led Gibbs, an active member in the campaign for Indigenous citizenship in Sydney since her involvement in the APA from 1937, to focus upon garnering support from women’s groups in her political campaigns. A biography of Gibbs ‘acknowledges the longstanding collaborations and historical entanglement of women’s lives ‘across the racial divide’.’⁶

Histories of inter-racial collaboration illustrate the existence of a collective narrative between Indigenous and white Australians. Prominent examples of such

³ Paisley, ‘Federalising the Aborigines?’, pp.248-9.

⁴ Jack Horner, *Seeking Racial Justice: An insider’s memoir of the movement for Aboriginal Advancement*, (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2004), p.11

⁵ Pearl Gibbs, ‘An Aboriginal Woman Asks for Justice’, *Woman Today*, April 1938, Flashback Films – Records Relating to *For Love or Money*, Mitchell Library (ML), MSS 7253/14.

⁶ Anna Cole, Victoria Haskins and Fiona Paisley, *Uncommon Ground: White women in Aboriginal History*, (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2005), xix.

histories include Fiona Paisley's *Loving Protection?*⁷, Victoria Haskin's *One Bright Spot* and Anna Cole, Victoria Haskins and Fiona Paisley's *Uncommon Ground: White Women in Aboriginal History*. *Isabel Flick: The many lives of an extraordinary Aboriginal Woman*, is an autobiography/biography initiated by Isabel Flick, who enlisted the help of Heather Goodall to record her memories and research the historical background of her story.⁸ The resultant book was completed after Isabel Flick's death in 2000 by Goodall and Flick's family. The important lesson taken from this book, both its subject and the process of creation, is the existence of a 'collective narrative'. This lesson is visible in Goodall's reflection. She writes:

What Isabel's story shows is that such polarisation is only part of the story. The colour lines were actually – sometimes – elastic and flexible. They could be stretched and lifted, even if they often did snap back into rigid tension under some sorts of pressure.⁹

The interest in female involvement in Indigenous affairs from the mid-1990s can be attributed to a number of factors; the emergence of a feminist historiography which emphasises women's role in nation-building, a sense of apology arising from an Indigenous critique of feminist involvement in Indigenous rights and the context of an increasing recognition of Indigenous affairs on the national political scene. Within this chapter I first explore what has been uncovered on the topic of female engagement in Indigenous rights, before examining why the topic has become the sight of much interest. Issues pertinent to this examination include; how did doctrines of feminism interact with Aboriginal affairs, the situation of Indigenous

⁷ Fiona Paisley, *Loving Protection? Australian Feminism and Aboriginal Women's Rights, 1919-1939*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000).

⁸ Isabel Flick and Heather Goodall, *Isabel Flick: The many lives of an extraordinary Aboriginal woman*, (Crows Nest, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 2004), xvi.

⁹ Flick and Goodall, *Isabel Flick*, xv-xvi.

affairs that made feminist involvement important and how women became involved in Indigenous affairs.

White Women and Indigenous Rights: An Extensive History

A persistent female interest in Indigenous affairs has been attributed to the emphasis upon citizenship rights in the feminist movement of the 1930s and 1940s. Two trends are visible. Firstly, that feminists protested against ‘the idea that women’s bodies existed to service men.’¹⁰ A concern over sexual exploitation was a central attribute of a maternal citizenship which was ‘significant in shaping a distinctive interwar feminism.’¹¹ Women’s groups argued for the necessity of female protectors on Aboriginal stations to prevent sexual abuse.

The second trend was that within the inter-war context, women embraced the evolving international political realm as a platform to extend female political influence. International organisations, such as the British Commonwealth League (BCL), emerged in the aftermath of the First World War. The BCL held an aim ‘to secure for the less forward races within the Commonwealth the best possible preparation for citizenship,’¹² and the League of Nations established a ‘Less Forward Races’ Committee in 1927 to handle issues pertaining to native populations. An international platform put a spotlight upon national responsibility. Australian women

¹⁰ Marilyn Lake, ‘Marriage as Bondage: The Anomaly of the Citizen Wife’, *Australian Historical Studies* 112, 1999, p.121.

¹¹ Holland, ‘Wives and Mothers Like Ourselves?’, *Australian Historical Studies* 117(2001), p.293.

¹² British Commonwealth League, ‘British Commonwealth League Conference 1960’, United Associations of Women records (UA), Mitchell Library (ML) MSS 2160/Y789.

understood their duty as national citizens to include demands for Aboriginal rights.¹³

An organised female involvement in Indigenous affairs was undertaken from Federation, particularly in Western Australian and the Northern Territory, due to the larger populations of tribal Aborigines in these states.¹⁴

The extensive control that state governments exercised over the lives of the Indigenous population made the voices of protest against the treatment of Aboriginal Australians in the first half of the twentieth century vitally important. In 1905 in Western Australia the Aborigines Protection Board was granted power to make decisions over all matters concerning Indigenous people. In 1911 the Northern Territory Ordinance named the chief protector legal guardian of all Aboriginal and mixed descent children. In NSW between 1911 and 1927 more than 1500 Aboriginal children were taken from their families. The Girl's Home at Cootamundra was established in 1912, which housed girls taken from their families at puberty.¹⁵ The corollary was that women lacked maternal rights over their children. Lake asserts that the campaign for Indigenous rights spanned a period of five decades and saw 'considerable change in the discursive terrain of anti-racist politics.'¹⁶ In the discursive shifts that were enacted therein the voice of prominent female activists was perennially to be heard above the general state of apathy.

¹³ Fiona Paisley, 'Unnecessary crimes and tragedies': race, gender and sexuality in Australian policies of Aboriginal child removal', in Antoinette Burton (ed), *Gender, Sexuality and Colonial Modernities*, (London: Routledge, 1999), p.141.

¹⁴ Bessie Rischbieth asserted that 'Western Australia, young in its general development, was left with the majority of nomadic people...The far Nor'west, the habitat of most of the Aboriginal tribes', in Bessie Rischbieth, *March of Australian Women: A Record of Fifty Years' Struggle for Equal Citizenship*, (Perth: Paternson Brokensha, 1964), p.48.

¹⁵ Goodall, 'New South Wales', pp.77-80.

¹⁶ Lake, 'Feminism and the Gendered Politics of Antiracism', p.92.

White women primarily came into contact with Aboriginal women within the confines of the home. In colonial Australia women were seen to embody the image of civility and therefore the role of civiliser on the homestead. This view is voiced by Eve Pownall who comments that ‘where there were white women, the aboriginal woman was better treated.’¹⁷ In 1909 in NSW the Aboriginal Protection Board acquired the power to indenture any child of an Aboriginal person.¹⁸ The resultant system of apprenticeship transformed white women’s interaction with Aboriginal children and as Victoria Haskins illustrates the white woman ‘became the instrument of a state-directed policy of dispersal.’¹⁹

White female involvement in Indigenous affairs was prominent in Australia from the 1920s. There were vocal campaigns of lone pioneers such as Mary Bennett²⁰ who lobbied feminist groups of the necessity to apply middle class values of school, family and individual action to a campaign for Indigenous rights.²¹ Published authors Mary Gilmore and Katharine Susannah Prichard highlighted the unjust situation of Australian Aborigines through their literary work. Prichard’s novel *Coonardoo*²² forged a new dialogue about the condition of Indigenous people prior to public recognition of the reality of the situation.²³ Prominent feminists decried Australia’s treatment of Indigenous Australians as a blot on Australia’s image and lobbied for

¹⁷ Eve Pownall, *Australian Pioneer Women*, 3rd ed., (NSW: Viking O’Neil, 1988), p.7.

¹⁸ Victoria Haskins, ‘Could you see to the return of my daughter: Fathers and daughters under the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board Child removal policy’, *Australian Historical Studies* 34 (121) 2003, p.111.

¹⁹ Victoria Haskins, ‘Lovable Natives’ and ‘Tribal Sisters’: Feminism, Maternalism, and the Campaign for Aboriginal Citizenship in New South Wales in the Late 1930s’, *Hecate*, 1998, p.12.

²⁰ Mary Bennett was the author of two prominent texts which were widely circulated many decades after they were published; Mary Bennett, *The Australian Aboriginal as a Human Being*, (London: Alston Rivers Ltd., 1930), and Mary Bennett, *Human Rights for Australian Aborigines: How can they learn without a teacher?*, (Brisbane: “Truth” and “Sportsman” Ltd., 1957).

²¹ Paisely, “Unnecessary crimes and tragedies”, pp.142-3.

²² Katharine Susannah Prichard, *Coonardoo: the well in the shadow*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1930).

²³ Jack Beasley, *A Gallop of Fire: Katharine Susannah Prichard: On Guard for Humanity*, (NSW: Wedgetail Press, 1993), p.98.

attention for Aboriginal rights at the 1927-1929 Royal Commission on the Constitution and the 1934 Moseley Royal Commission; the names Bessie Rischbieth, Ada Bromham, Constance Ternet Cooke and Jessie Street are associated with Indigenous rights activism as well as feminist campaigns.²⁴

If the context of injustice and apathy meant that the voices of Australian women on the issues of Indigenous rights were important, the vehicles of their protest are even more so. There has, however, been a limited examination of the institutional involvement of feminist groups within the campaign for Indigenous rights. Heather Goodall and Jackie Huggins argue that this is due to the conflict between Aboriginal and white women over the role of anthropology in the discussion of Aboriginal rights which resulted in 'limited early political alliances and the most productive relationships tended to be personal rather than organisational.'²⁵ To obscure an institutional focus, however, loses sight of the important role social organisations play within society. I explore how the historiography can be utilised in new directions, to transcend the *fact* of the importance of women's activism and perceive what this activism demonstrated about the feminist movement and what it can illustrate about a change over time.

²⁴ For the views of these women see, for example; Jessie Street, *Report on Aborigines in Australia*, (Sydney: Author, 1957), Ada Bromham, *The First Australians and the new Australians*, (Perth: Port Printing Works, 1957), and Rischbieth, *March of Australian Women*.

²⁵ Heather Goodall and Jackie Huggins, 'Aboriginal women are everywhere in contemporary struggles', in Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (eds.), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, (Marrickville, NSW: Harcourt Brace Janovich, 1992), p.400.

Feminist National History: *Creating a Nation*

From the mid-1990s feminist historians in Australia have begun to recognise the importance of pre-1970s feminism. Gail Reekie, in 1985, called for a greater study of women's organisations 'between the two acknowledged waves of agitation,' in order 'to help us better understand the discontinuities in political effectiveness and the resilience of feminist historiography.'²⁶ The study of between the waves feminism was catalysed by *Creating a Nation*²⁷ which is recognised as a foundational text in placing women within the mainstream of nation-building.²⁸ This text did not simply reproduce a recognition of 'discontinuities in political effectiveness,' as sought by Reekie, but focused instead on continuities.

In asserting that women have had an important influence on the Australian nation Lake comments that in *Creating a Nation* 'we locked ourselves into discursive strategies that echoed and reproduced, with their potential and limitations, older feminist claims – we located ourselves in a feminist tradition that linked Rose Scott in the 1890s with Jean Daley in the 1920s and Jessie Street in the 1940s.'²⁹ Zora Simic situated her research in this context of a revival in the interest of 'between the waves' feminism in Australia, which she attributes to Lake. Simic states that Lake enabled the creation of 'a continuous history of feminist activism in Australia.'³⁰

²⁶ Gail Reekie, 'Warm Sexuality and Feminist: Perth Women's Organisations, 1938-1945', in *Historical Studies* 2(5), October 1985, p.591.

²⁷ Patricia Grimshaw, Marilyn Lake, Ann McGrath and Marian Quartly (eds.), *Creating a Nation*, (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1994).

²⁸ Marilyn Lake, 'Feminist History as 'National History'', *Australian Historical Studies* 106(1996), p.155.

²⁹ Lake, 'Feminist History as 'National History'', p.158.

³⁰ Simic, 'A Hall of Selected Mirrors', p.13.

A recognition of the continuity of feminist activity revised notions previously held by historians about feminism before 1970, which had overshadowed the achievements of earlier movements. Gail Griffith commented in 1988 that feminism before the second wave was ‘characterised by bourgeois tendencies which has had a lasting impact upon the women’s movement, the ramifications of which are still felt today.’³¹ With the politics of female liberation in decline, the more conservative tendencies of early feminist movements were a target. Susan Magery remembers, in the 1970s, ‘dismissing them because they did not question the institution of marriage; they could not even see the bars of the cage that imprisoned them.’³² A revision of the value of feminism before 1970 has, Lake reminds us, necessitated historians to ‘recognise the achievement of a maternalist welfare state, even allowing for all its limitations.’³³

Recognition of the importance of women’s contribution to the nation illustrates the influential nature of civil society. The assertion by *Creating a Nation* that women have held an integral role in the building of the nation has not, however, gone uncontested. John Hirst asserted that ‘defining the nation, ruling the nation and defending the nation have been done mostly by men’ and therefore women’s influence was limited.³⁴ This assertion that political influence can only be exerted by those enacting legislation ignores the influence of civil society in nation building. Penny Russell illustrates that women’s preoccupation with their status and public perception of their profile led women to seek an active role in society. Hirst ignores

³¹ Gail Griffith, ‘The Feminist Club of NSW, 1914-1970: A History of Feminist Politics in Decline’, *Hecate*, vol.14., no.1, 1998, p.66.

³² Susan Magarey, *Passions of the First Wave Feminists*, (Sydney; U.N.S.W. Press, 2001), p.1.

³³ Lake, ‘Feminist History as National History’, p.158.

³⁴ John Hirst, ‘Women and History’, *Quadrant*, no.315, vol. Xxxix, 3(March 1995), p.38.

any influence of this nature.³⁵ Women aimed largely to influence the moral character of the nation, and through their organisational campaigns lobbied for a change in public opinion and shaped policy from outside the institutions. This was necessary due to an absence of women in Parliament. A narrow, masculine view of Australian culture fails to appreciate the framework within which women sought political action. Obscuring notions of morality and national character, as perceived by Hirst, enfeebles the very notion of nationalism as a sight for historical interest.

A heightened feminist interest in white women's involvement in Indigenous affairs from the 1930s is undoubtedly entwined with a history of nation-building. McGrath asserts Aboriginal people are only starting to be seen in collaborative feminist history, and that '*Creating a Nation*, represents a departure.'³⁶ Women sought to play an integral part in shaping a tolerant national ethos and promote universal human rights. Women's groups were undoubtedly interested in changing legislature, but they also sought, through campaigns for Aboriginal welfare and rights, to champion a certain national character and assert women's ability to contribute to it. An awareness of past action taken by white Australian women negates an argument of past ignorance of Aboriginal abuse. In the face of our increased awareness of what was an uncomfortable reality, it behoves us all to recognise that present inequalities are not the result of past ignorance and to reflect upon the necessities of present nation-building.

³⁵ Penny Russell, 'Cultures of Distinction', in Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White (eds.), *Cultural History in Australia*, (Sydney: UNSW press, 2003), p.163.

³⁶ Ann McGrath, *Contested Ground: Australian Aborigines under the British Crown*, (NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1995), p.317.

The criticisms of Indigenous scholars means that any incorporation of Indigenous rights in a history of female contributions to nation building must involve a critique of the framework within which white women advocated Aboriginal rights. A major criticism of Indigenous scholars is that the feminist movement sought to subsume racial prejudice suffered by Indigenous women under a doctrine of universal womanhood, and as Pat O'Shane states, sexism is not the foremost worry for Indigenous women.³⁷

In 1994 Jackie Huggins asserted that 'the strong stance that Aboriginal women have taken against the white women's movement remains universal.'³⁸ Anne Pattel-Gray argues that 'since the late 1960s, Aboriginal women have been confined to the sideline of the feminist movement in Australia.'³⁹ White feminists did espouse a policy of anti-racism, but they have been criticised for their failure to recognise that their privileged position in society is based on an affirmation of racism.⁴⁰ This is starting to be redressed through a critical eye given to feminist activity in Indigenous affairs. Lake illustrates that a maternalist framework was the primary tool, which whilst overturning the voice of Indigenous peoples themselves, was perhaps abandoned at the worst possible time. As the removal of Aboriginal children increased and the rights of mothers was undermined, the feminist movement turned

³⁷ Pat O'Shane, 'Aboriginal Women and the Women's Movement', in *Refracting Voices: Feminist Perspectives from Refractory Girl*, (N.S.W.: Refractory Girl Feminist Journal, 1993), p.74.

³⁸ Jackie Huggins, 'A Contemporary view of Aboriginal Women's Relationship to the White Women's Movement' in Norma Grieve and Alisa Burns (eds.), *Australian Women: Contemporary Feminist Thought*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.76.

³⁹ Anne Pattel-Gray, 'The Hard Truth: White Secrets, Black Realities', *Australian Feminist Studies* 30, 14(1999), p.259.

⁴⁰ Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' up to the white woman: Aboriginal Women and Feminism*, (University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 2000), xx.

away from privileging the rights of mothers.⁴¹ Holland also critiques the failure of feminist groups to challenge the absorptionist policies.⁴²

The emergence of many histories of white involvement in Indigenous affairs came in the mid-1990s. At this time it seemed that positive steps were being taken towards reconciliation. Historical endeavour was enlisted as a basis for present action. Fiona Paisley undertook her postgraduate work in the 1990. Uncovering a genealogy of white women's involvement in Aboriginal politics, Paisley situated her study in her contemporary political context. In 1999 Paisley asserted that 'questions of reconciliation and apology are now challenging many non-indigenous Australians to rethink a progressive teleology of Australian settler national identity.'⁴³ Similar thoughts on contemporary political interests were expressed in 1995 by McGrath. She wrote, 'in considering what we hope to achieve for the centenary of Federation in 2001 the issue of Aboriginal reconciliation has become the most important issue of all.'⁴⁴ Not only is recognition of colonial history seeking to illuminate the achievements and shortcomings of feminism in the past, but the writing of history is inexplicably caught up in how it is hoped women can contribute to Australia's future.

My context of writing begs an examination of the involvement of feminist organisations in Aboriginal affairs. In 1999 Paisley situates her writing in the revived interest of Indigenous affairs, galvanised by the *Bringing Them Home Report*. Less than a decade on the context already appears unfamiliar. No longer is reconciliation on the national political agenda, Native Title legislation has been weakened, the

⁴¹ Lake, *Getting Equal*, p.205.

⁴² Holland, 'Wives and Mothers Like Ourselves?' p.305.

⁴³ Paisley, 'Unnecessary crimes and tragedies', p.143.

⁴⁴ McGrath, *Contested Ground*, xxx.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission abolished, and issues of Indigenous health and welfare lack political currency. In this context nothing could be more important than raising public awareness and countering apathy.

Feminist organisations understood the importance of public opinion in initiating social change. They used a collective voice in order to be heard and encouraged press coverage. Each of the organisations I examined kept a collection of press cuttings to keep abreast of current affairs. This emphasised a perception of the power of the press. The UA commented that ‘we believe that the modern press exerts a greater influence on public opinion than any other force.’⁴⁵ A similar view was held by the Feminist Club which took satisfaction from any press coverage of its activities. The 1948 annual report explains ‘the Club has been very well treated by the Press, and representatives of the Press have attended lunches and afternoon sessions.’⁴⁶ Women’s organisations evidently saw their primary role as lobbying public opinion. Indeed the *Sydney Morning Herald* described the UA as a ‘speakers club’ which emphasised self-expression. In this capacity the UA threatened to give rise to ‘a vast body of feminine public opinion with its very eloquence and thus capture for itself all those ‘rights’ for which women strive so hard.’⁴⁷

Conclusion

This chapter illustrates that feminist involvement in Indigenous affairs has a crucial place within current trends in feminist historiography. Histories that recognise women’s capacity to shape the nation must acknowledge the privileged position of

⁴⁵ Letter to the editor, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21/4/1932.

⁴⁶ 34th Annual Report, 29/02/1948, FC, ML MSS 1703/K21798.

⁴⁷ ‘Self-Expression: Women and Public Speakers, Club Formed’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23/02/1935.

white women within the colonial framework. Furthermore, the colonial process is ongoing and inevitably shapes the histories we write. Recognition of a persistent power relationship is one way to incorporate the criticism of Indigenous scholars of feminist interest in Indigenous affairs.

A central feature of a revised feminist historiography is an assertion of a continuity in feminism in Australia. This provides the opportunity to trace feminist development and find the seeds of the second-wave as early as the 1950s. Looking at feminist involvement in Indigenous affairs illustrates this development by recognising women's capacity to shape the nation. Indigenous affairs were a platform upon which feminist sought to shape the national ethos, and the development of this platform between 1930 and 1960 is one of radicalisation.

The current state of apathy in relation to Indigenous rights makes a study of social institutions so important, as it addresses the question of how feminist organisations sought to shape the national character. The vast knowledge of white women's involvement illustrates an important role for women in collaborative politics. Yet an institutional analysis of a local context is missing. Paisley cited an increasing interest in Indigenous affairs as the context for her writing, the current silence, however, represents my context. Chapter two starts this analysis in the 1930s and seeks to recover the activities of the Feminist Club of NSW in Indigenous affairs, which have been previously overlooked.

Chapter Two: The 1930s – Progress in Conservatism

'we must accept what is no longer a "problem" but a straight out responsibility and work for atonement of our past mistakes.'

Joan Kingsley-Strack, 1938.¹

The 1930s is my starting period in an examination of organisational feminist involvement in Indigenous affairs. This chapter looks at the Feminist Club of New South Wales and the alignment of a conservative political outlook with a progressive platform of Indigenous rights. I examine the involvement of feminist groups in Indigenous affairs to counter the assertion that there was a schism in the feminist movement in Sydney in the 1930s – the view articulated by Jessie Street and historians of the period such as Gail Griffith, Zora Simic and Marilyn Lake. The derision of 'philanthropic' feminism, associated with these views, has resulted in the Feminist Club being overlooked in a dialogue of progressive politics - a trend exacerbated by a desire to channel the discussion of all feminism into a left/right-wing dichotomy. As Ruby Rich, vice-President of the Feminist Club in the 1920s, commented,

We know that because you start something, it doesn't always means that you will achieve that, but at least you have planted a seed, if justice is there, righteousness is there, if they have been planted I feel sure that the history of life generally shows that ultimately something will come forth.²

The start of feminist involvement in Indigenous affairs in Sydney is largely situated with the activity of the Feminist Club. By looking at feminist politics in Sydney in the 1930s and acknowledging the platform the Feminist Club provided to Indigenous affairs, a more progressive agenda for the Club begins to emerge.

¹ Notes from talks on Aborigines, 'What of the Australian Aborigines: my talk at church 1938', JKS NLA MS 9661, box 8.

² Ruby Rich, recorded by Hazel de Berg, 4 August 1976, National Library of Australia, ORAL DeB 954-955.

In the 1930s feminists sought to overturn the assumption that concerns of the household, traditionally denoted as a woman's domain, could be described as non-political.³ In the evolution from this notion a later radicalisation of feminism is visible. *The Australian Women's Mirror* of January 30th 1940 urged white women to 'try an Abo Apprentice! A friend has solved her domestic service problem by employing an aboriginal domestic apprentice.' This friend asserted her apprentice "has become one of the family and we have become very fond of her. She is worth three of the white maids we have employed."⁴ A Eurocentric self-interest of white middle-class women undoubtedly existed, but it was not the only narrative. The article illustrates an interaction between white and Indigenous women in the home. A platform of Indigenous affairs which emerged from this relationship demonstrates that a woman's concern, emerging from the domestic sphere, could indeed be political.

White women's contact with Aboriginal people in the home, through an apprenticeship system, highlights the middle-class subject position of these women. From a basis of concern with the position of domestic servants, white women in the feminist movement embarked on a campaign to change the position of Indigenous peoples. In the 1930s Aboriginal women represented 1.5% of the domestic service workforce.⁵ Aboriginal domestic servants were under the control of the Aboriginal Protection Board, who were liable for not paying Aboriginal people their apprenticeship

³ Meredith Foley, 'The Women's Movement in New South Wales and Victoria, 1918-1938', thesis, University of Sydney, 1985, p.5.

⁴ Exert from *The Australian Woman's Mirror*, 30/1/1940, JKS, NLA MS 9661, box 11.

⁵ Inara Walden, 'That was Slavery Days': Aboriginal Domestic Servants in New South Wales in the Twentieth Century', in *Aboriginal Workers*, special issues of *Labour History* 69, November 1995, p.196.

money, and also holding back Child Endowment funds.⁶ Such action towards indentured servants became visible to their mistresses.

In a criticism of white female involvement in Indigenous affairs, Aileen Moreton-Robinson emphasises the ‘middle-class white women’ subject position of women who have long been involved in the feminist movement. She states it has ‘remained invisible, unnamed and marked.’⁷ The middle-class identity of the feminist movement in the inter-war years is however self-evident. For example, the Executive Meetings of the Feminist Club were held at 1:15pm on Tuesdays; hardly amenable to working class women.⁸ Any financial problems of the UA were solved by monetary donations of its members.⁹ The visible nature of this middle-class identity overshadows my investigation.

The subjects of both national and progressive politics are addressed in this chapter. I contend that ‘progressive’ feminism always involved Indigenous rights as an integral part of its concept of a tolerant nation state. The character of the nation was always an explicit focus of feminist groups. Ann McGrath asserts that Aboriginal rights campaigns did not have the power to challenge the nation-state in the 1930s.¹⁰ This comment begs the question of whether women’s involvement in Indigenous affairs in the

⁶ The APA asserted that the Board held £8,000 in apprenticeship money and Child Endowment funds of £6,000. The Board asserted they had withheld these funds for ‘safety’ reasons; President’s Report of the Fifth Annual meeting of the Aborigines Progressive Association, 31/12/1940, JKS, NLA MS 9661, box 11.

⁷ Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin’ up to the White Woman*, p.95.

⁸ Minutes of executive meeting 6/5/30, FC, ML MSS 1703/K21797

⁹ Rand, Patricia, ‘Feminism and Class: The United Associations of Women and the Council of Action for Equal Pay in the Depression’, in Margaret Bevege, Margaret James and Carmel Shute, *Worth Her Salt: Women at work in Australia*, (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1982), p.271.

¹⁰ Ann McGrath, ‘“Beneath the Skin”: Australian Citizenship, Rights and Aboriginal Women’, in Renate Howe (ed.), *Women and the State in Australian Perspectives*, (special edition of *Journal of Australia Studies*), (Bundoora: La Trobe University Press, 1993), p.101.

1930s was attempting to challenge the nation-state. In seeking to shape the national character and trying to force legislative change they were indeed doing just that. Feminist politics of the 1930s have widely been associated with an imperialistic identity.¹¹ Women were undoubtedly drawn to the politics of the empire, but stopping analysis here diminishes from what feminist involvement in domestic affairs can show us about the character of the feminist movement in Sydney. Here Indigenous affairs hold the key. In examining the character of the Feminist Club and the UA in the campaign to alter the Aboriginal Protection Board, a dialogue between Indigenous and white actors is visible. In the alignment of a conservative body with progressive politics, as represented by the Feminist Club, it is evident that a model of feminist campaigns in a politics of leftist activism had not yet emerged in the 1930s.

Campaigns for Indigenous Rights in the 1930s

In Australia the 1930s witnessed a growing concern over questions of race. The result was an extension of surveillance over Aboriginal people. The Australian census in 1911 merely asked respondents what race they belonged to. By 1933 more specific details were seen as pertinent. The census read, 'if of European race wherever born, write European, if non-European state the race to which you belong as Aboriginal, Chinese, Hindu, Negro, Afghan, etc. If a half-caste write 'H.C.' as 'H.C. Aboriginal', 'H.C. Chinese', etc.'¹² In 1933 there were 11,000 Aborigines in NSW who were

¹¹ Alison Holland, 'Feminism, Colonialism and Aboriginal Workers: An Anti-Slavery Crusade', in *Aboriginal Workers*, special issues of *Labour History* 69, November 1995, p.56.

¹² Andrew Markus, *Australian Race Relations, 1788-1993*, (N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 1994), p.128.

maintained on 71 reserves. By 1935, over 30% of the known Aboriginal population was under the complete control of Protection managers and police surveillance.¹³

The Aboriginal Protection Board became the main focus for Indigenous rights campaigns in the 1930s. The APA and CACR sought to reduce the power the Board had over the lives of Aboriginal people. Between 1909 and 1938, 2,000 children were taken from their parents and made wards of the state. Under the Protection Board, 570 girls were apprenticed as wards between the 1910s and 1930s.¹⁴ In November 1937 a Select Committee Inquiry into the Administration of the Aboriginal Protection Board was convened following from a private motion moved by the Labor member for Cobar, Mark Davidson. He called for an inquiry into the Board as ‘the indentured labour system is scandalous. Indentured women are treated like slaves and the males are subject to sweating and exploitation.’¹⁵ The Inquiry, however, languished in early 1938 due to the lack of a quorum. Jack Horner asserted that despite its failure to shed light on Aboriginal abuse or draw serious government intervention in the realm of Indigenous affairs, the inquiry catalysed a new convergence in racial politics and short-term media interest in the conditions of Aboriginal Australians.¹⁶ For this reason the Inquiry holds specific importance in the history of Australian Indigenous rights campaigns.

In 1940 there was an amendment to the Aboriginal Protection Bill, but it was a disappointing result for those who had campaigned for change consistently during the

¹³ Goodall, ‘New South Wales’, p.85.

¹⁴ Walden, ‘That was Slavery Days’, p.196.

¹⁵ ‘Aborigines Investigation: Government committed by snap vote of opposition’, *Telegraph* 10/11/1937, FC, ML MSS 1703/K21801.

¹⁶ Horner, *Vote Ferguson*, p.53.

1930s. Under the 1940 Aboriginal Protection (Amendment) Bill, the Aborigines Protection Board was dissolved and replaced by a ten member Aborigines Welfare Board, on which additional powers were conferred. These included the power to admit any Aboriginal child to the control of the Board, and to establish homes for the reception maintenance, education and training of Indigenous children for apprenticeship. This legislation prompted deep frustration among those campaigning for change. President of the CACR, Michael Sawtell wrote to the Premier on the 1st July 1940 decrying that ‘you completely and callously ignored every request made by the Aborigines...Your action is deplorable. It is against every conception of Australian Democracy.’¹⁷ Pearl Gibbs was a member of the APA and the only Aboriginal member of CACR. In 1938 she asserted that, ‘this word ‘Protection Board’, is a fighting word with me. We don’t want it! We only want the same protection as the white person gets.’¹⁸ Gibbs sought to galvanise public support for the APA, and spent much of her time speaking to citizens organisations of which ‘the Feminists and Oxford group seemed to be the only ones interested.’¹⁹ It is therefore necessary to ask what this involvement of feminist clubs in Indigenous rights, a rare quality of the period, actually involved.

¹⁷ Michael Sawtell to NSW Premier, 1/7/1940, JKS, NLA MS 9661, box 11.

¹⁸ Sally Banister, ‘Our Aboriginal Sisters: An appeal for Justice to their unhappy race’, *Women Today*, May 1938, p.9.

¹⁹ Horner, *Vote Ferguson*, p.85.

The Feminist Club of New South Wales and the United Associations

A Feminist is a woman with an awakened sense of her own individual responsibility towards life, and an anxiety to express it in action.

The Feminist Club of New South Wales²⁰

The Feminist Club of New South Wales has been largely ignored in a history of Australian feminism. It is dismissed as a mere social body with a conservative political outlook. The Feminist Club, however, provides a contrast to the character of later feminist organisations involved in Indigenous affairs. A journal article written by Gail Griffith in 1988 is the only historical work which seeks to give the entire history of the Feminist Club. Griffith reports that ‘despite its achievements in legislative reforms, the Feminist Club cannot be said to have helped women in the wider community in any dramatic way.’²¹ This conclusion has not led to further consideration of the organisation as pivotal in the story of feminist activism in Sydney.

Zora Simic supports Griffith’s analysis and asserts that ‘to women of the left, the Feminist Club epitomised the feminist cliché of the time – well-to-do and politically narrow.’²² The Feminist Club in the 1930s fits into the narrative of Sydney-based feminism, dictated by Street, in its refusal to amalgamate with other women’s groups to form the UA. Simic’s criticism that the Feminist Club represented features which were repugnant to women of the left is illustrative of a feminist historiography which seeks to describe women’s emancipation in terms of leftist political activity. Situating the

²⁰ Undated pamphlet, FC, ML MSS 1703/K2108

²¹ Griffith, ‘The Feminist Club of NSW’, pp.65-66.

²² Simic, ‘A Hall of Selected Mirrors’, p.49.

feminist movement of the 1930s into a dichotomy of left and right, is not, however, necessarily appropriate.

Ruby Rich saw no contradiction in supporting women of different political affiliations because she believed that it was more difficult for women to secure selection in Australia than elsewhere.²³ Ideological differences did not seem to fracture the feminist cause in the 1930s. Rich was involved in the election campaigns of both Millicent Preston-Stanley and Street, although Preston-Staley stood for the UAP and Street for the ALP. The Presidency of Preston-Stanley has emphasised a notion of the overarching conservatism of the Feminist Club. Peter Sekules commented that in the 1930s ideological and sectarian differences were apparent in the feminist movement, owing to tensions arising from Street's adherence to socialism from 1937.²⁴ I argue that such ideological dissention was by no means so apparent. The split in the feminist movement in 1930 with the formation of the UA did not render sectarian movements, but under this conception the activities of the Feminist Club have been overlooked, including its pioneering place in the field of Indigenous rights.

The Feminist Club of NSW was formed in 1914 as a discussion group about suffragette campaigns taking place in England and came to prominence after the First World War, under the direction of Preston-Stanley. Rich remembers her introduction to the then but small club in the early 1920s and noted 'they gave one the feeling of their potential, their ambition, the opportunity for one's development through that club and

²³ Rich, ORAL DeB 954-955.

²⁴ Sekules, *Jessie Street*, p.47.

through the people that it could bring together.’ This organisation was remarkable at the time given that ‘people were very little interested. They knew of course, hardly anything about the status of women.’²⁵ This comment highlights a point often overlooked in the study of feminism in the first half of the twentieth century. It is easy to point to a growing number of women’s organisations seeking a greater role for women in the civil and political realms, and their prominent leaders. Denoting such activity as middle-class does not, however, render it common-place.²⁶ It has been easy to point to maternalist rhetoric as conservative and thus not progressive in nature. However feminism in the 1930s sought to overturn assumptions that ‘women’s concerns’ were non-political.²⁷ Middle-class concerns of the home were voiced in the political arena.

In 1939 the Feminist Club re-iterated that it ‘is founded on the principles of BROTHERHOOD and PROGRESS. The definite objective of its Members is to secure equality of liberty, status and opportunity in all spheres between men and women.’²⁸ Its perceived duty was to ‘outline the Feminist Policy on the civil, moral and economic enfranchisement of Woman, and to act as the pioneer in these reforms.’²⁹ A fundamental aim was to get women into Parliament, supporting individual candidates but remaining

²⁵ Ruby Rich, recorded by Hazel de Berg, 4 June 1975, National Library of Australia, ORAL DeB 835-839.

²⁶ There were many other women’s organisations which did not seek an expansion of the opportunities of women, for example the Australian Women’s Guild of Empire which had two main activities – the evangelising of workers and infiltration of industrial suburbs via sewing and children’s circles. For further information see Josie Castle, ‘The Australian Women’s Guild of Empire’, in Elizabeth Windschuttle (ed.), *Women, Class and History: Feminist Perspectives on Australia, 1788-1978*, (Melbourne: Dominion Press, 1980), pp. 287-307.

²⁷ Foley, ‘The Women’s Movement’, p.5.

²⁸ The Feminist Club of NSW, *The Feminist Club of NSW – Silver Jubilee Souvenir 1914-1939*, (Sydney: B.H. Macdougall, 1939), p.1.

²⁹ The Feminist Club of NSW, *Silver Jubilee*, p.1.

firmly non-party affiliated, and standing against the formation of a Woman's Party.³⁰ They supported the principle of proportional representation 'as the only equitable method of securing direct representation of the people.'³¹ It was affiliated with the AFWV, although it 'still claimed that the absolute right to complete independence of action upon any matter or principle action upon any matter or principle'³², a claim to follow one's morality and principle unfettered which cannot be maintained by politically partisan organisations.

The Feminist Club of NSW at its Silver Jubilee in 1939 reflected with satisfaction upon its achievements. It had successfully lobbied for the passage of the Women's Legal Status Act, under which women in NSW were able to hold every office under the crown except that of juror, and the establishment of a chair of Obstetrics at the University of Sydney. The Infants Guardianship Bill was drafted following a 25,000 signature petition organised by the Feminist Club. It campaigned to remove from the Crimes Act the power of the police to use force in searching prisoners arrested under the Vagrancy Act, and was involved in the campaign for equal nationality rights for women. In 1936 the Nationality Act was passed which guaranteed the national status of women who married British subjects was improved. From 1933 they provided funds for the Frank H. Saywell Free Kindergarten, paying for free milk for children and donating toys.³³

³⁰ Minutes of executive meeting, 20/4/1931, FC, ML MSS 1703/K21797.

³¹ Minutes of executive meeting 22/4/1930, FC, ML MSS 1703/K21797.

³² Minutes of executive meeting 29/7/1930, FC, ML MSS 1703/K21797.

³³ The Feminist Club of NSW, *Silver Jubilee*, pp.10-11.

Jessie Street asserted that she had formed the UA because of a frustration at the operations of the Feminist Club.³⁴ Jessie Street was President of the Feminist Club in 1929 but resigned her position in order to preside over the amalgamation of the Women's League, the Women's Voter Association and the Women's Service League to form the UA, which the Feminist Club did not join. The feminist movement in Sydney did not carry divergent interests from this point. The UA has not been accredited with breaking the middle-class feminist mould, even by its official historian, Winifred Mitchell. It retained a conservative outlook and adhered strictly to a policy to remain outside the political arena. It resigned its subscription to *Woman Today* in September 1936, suspecting communist affiliations. It stated 'there are so many difficulties in the way of achievement of our Feminist objectives, that we have to be careful not to estrange any of our members who by believing in Feminism have other diverse political beliefs.'³⁵

Despite some aspects of a conservative outlook, the UA is perceived to have planted the seeds for a subsequent feminism of a more radical character, largely due to its campaign for equal wages, which essentially led to the organisations activities intruding into working women's lives. Their interest in equal pay preceded trade unions.³⁶ The UA advocated a gradual attainment of equal pay, rather than immediate equality which was advocated by trade unions.³⁷ A gradualist approach towards equal pay brought Street into conflict with trade unions, and specifically Muriel Heagney. Street was, however,

³⁴ Mitchell, *Fifty Years of Feminist Achievement*, p.6.

³⁵ Minutes of executive meeting 1/10/1930, FC, ML MSS 1703/K21797.

³⁶ Rand, 'Feminism and Class', p.284.

³⁷ In a 1935 pamphlet *How to Achieve Equal Pay*, the UA outlined a five year plan, which would see an immediate increase of women's wages from 54% to 60% of male rate, followed by increments of 2% every three months; Sekules, *Jessie Street*, p.72.

later to be viewed as ‘a genuine advocate of equal pay, one who was later to sacrifice her social position for her belief in peace and socialism.’³⁸

It is premature to designate the Feminist Club as the antithesis of the progressive nature of the UA as the initiatives of the two organisations remained very similar. In June 1936 the Feminist Club was invited by the UA to form a joining committee of six to deal with matters arising from the Legal Status of Husband, Wife and Child Conference proposals.³⁹ Throughout the 1930s they continued to collaborate on issues such as child endowment, and divorce laws. The UA, up until 1939, sought continually to amalgamate with the Feminist Club.

Feminist Involvement in Indigenous Affairs

The Feminist Club’s interest in Indigenous affairs has been described by Griffith as an indication of the conservative nature of the Feminist Club because of a welfaristic approach. The Feminist Club however held a wider interest in Indigenous affairs, not solely concerns of welfare. Norma Cameron assumed the Presidency of the Feminist Club in 1934. Her appointment, Griffith asserts, ‘reflected the growing conservatism of the club.’ This was exhibited through concerns ranging from ‘the excessive price of potatoes, Aboriginal welfare and temperance, to the amendment to the National Insurance

³⁸ Audrey Johnson, *Bread and Roses: A personal history of three militant women and their friends 1902-1988*, (NSW: Left Book Club, 1990), p.118

³⁹ Minutes of executive meeting 18/6/1936, UA, ML MSS 2160/472 Y4477.

Bill.’⁴⁰ The Feminist Club was concerned for Indigenous welfare from a very early date.

The minutes of the executive meeting of September 5 1930 reads that:

It was resolved that it be a recommendation to the members of the meeting today that we write the Government re. supplying a medical woman for work among the Aborigines and then write to Country Women’s Association that we are willing to act with them in the matter.⁴¹

Unfortunately the records of the Feminist Club between 1931 and 1939 are missing from their holdings in the Mitchell Library. In 1939 the Feminist Club outlined that ‘during 1937-8 the Club worked solidly for a better deal for the Australian Aborigines, by arranging meetings and attending Parliament, and is still working for the appointment of women to the new Aborigine Protection Board.’⁴² This illustrates that the Club’s interest in Indigenous affairs extended beyond issues of welfare.

Two prominent members of the Feminist Club, Cameron and Grace Scobie were members of the Association for the Protection of Native Races (APNR). Established in 1911, the APNR was chaired by A.P. Elkin, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Sydney. It advocated a national Aboriginal policy because ‘as a nation we are responsible for the welfare of our fellow-countrymen, and the National Government, with the Prime minister at its head, must administer that responsibility.’⁴³ Elkin wrote to Sawtell in 1939 that ‘I do not know whether the APNR has really discussed the question of full citizenship rights for the Aborigines of NSW.’⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Griffith, ‘The Feminist Club of NSW’, p.62.

⁴¹ Minutes of executive meeting, FC, ML MSS 1703/K21797.

⁴² The Feminist Club of NSW, *Silver Jubilee*, p.11.

⁴³ *The Aborigines’ Protector: Official organ of the Association for the Protection of Native Races*, vol. 1., no. 3., October 1936.

⁴⁴ AP Elkin to Sawtell, 9th November 1939, JKS, NLA MS 9661, box 11.

Cameron and Scobie's interest in Indigenous affairs was not, however, circumscribed by the APNR and they drew information from meetings of the CACR. Cameron's involvement in Indigenous Rights campaigns is described by Joan Kingsley-Strack, member of the CACR and the Feminist Club; 'Mrs Cameron told of her belief until recently that the abos at La Perouse were the only ones of their kind in Australia but she had studied the question in recent years and now realised the ghastly state of affairs and the Feminist Club had taken up the whole question'.⁴⁵ It was her education at the hands of the CACR that led to the Feminist Club to a renewed interest in Indigenous Affairs.

Street, on behalf of the UA, wrote to Kingsley-Strack on 6 June 1939, and commented that 'up to date we have done no work in connection with the aborigines.'⁴⁶ The same was not true for the Feminist Club. Cameron wrote to the Chief Secretary in May 1939 that:

The Sub-committee of the Feminist Club of NSW, which has made a study of the Australian Aborigines and their claim to citizen's rights, press the following resolutions before you, for consideration when appointments are made to the new Aborigines Protection Board:

- 1) That a Sub-Committee to the Board be appointed on which should be an Aborigines man and woman as representing their own people, with a view to studying the problem of educating the Aborigines for full citizenship.
- 2) That a qualified woman representing Women's Organisations should be appointed to the Board...
- 3) That a representative of the opposition party to the government should be a member of the Board
- 4) That at least two members representing recognised religious bodies should be appointed to the Board.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Letter to the Editor, *Daily Telegraph*, October 10, 1939, JKS, NLA MS 9661, box 11.

⁴⁶ Jessie Street to Joan Kingsley-Strack, 6/6/1939, JKS, NLA, MS 9661, box 11.

⁴⁷ Norma Cameron to Mr Gollan, attached in letter to Joan Kingsley-Strack, 4/5/1939, JKS, NLA MS 9661, box 11.

Further, in a deputation to the Prime Minister, the Feminist Club asked ‘the Federal Government to co-ordinate the services in bringing other states and if possible to bring Australian aborigines under Federal Jurisdiction.’⁴⁸ It also lobbied the Federal Government to provide a mobile road patrol of ‘white women of a mature age’ in the Northern Territory to protect native women, believing such an initiative to be desirable due to a construction of a defence road taking place between Bordum and Tennant Creek, which raised fears of native women being attracted to workmen’s camps.⁴⁹

The impetus of feminist involvement in Aboriginal affairs in the 1930s clearly came from the Feminist Club. Following urgings from the Feminist Club, members of the UA attended Parliament for the sitting of the Select Committee Inquiry and on this front ‘it was decided to write to the Feminist Club congratulating them on their work with regard to the Aborigines.’⁵⁰ Such was the lead taken by the Feminist Club that Street ‘reported that Miss Camilla Wedgewood was unable to consider going on the Aborigines Protection Board. After discussion it was decided to suggest the name of Mrs P.A. Cameron as the woman on the Board.’⁵¹

The Feminist Club’s involvement in Indigenous rights campaigns illustrates that the organisation sought active involvement in civil affairs and institutional change. The Feminist Club was at the forefront of the protest regarding the dissolution of the Select Committee Inquiry. A meeting was held at the Feminist Club following the dissolution

⁴⁸ Minutes of executive meeting, 27/6/1939, FC, ML MS 1703/K21797.

⁴⁹ Undated article, ‘Aborigines Protection’, JKS, NLA MS 9661, box 5.

⁵⁰ Minutes of council meeting 17/2/38, UA, ML MSS 2160/427 – Y4477.

⁵¹ Minutes of executive meeting, UA 27/4/1939, ML MSS 2160/427-Y4477.

where Bill Ferguson told the women of the need to ‘educate the minds of the white people...otherwise the thrusting back of my people...will continue – until they are swept off the earth.’⁵² Cameron spoke to the press:

The word had been spread around women’s organisations that if we turned up today we would be given a prime example of how our Parliamentarians go about their work. There is no doubt about that prophecy. They don’t even attend the meeting. We were absolutely disgusted.⁵³

Cameron, along with Scobie and an anthropologist Caroline Kelly, were appointed as a sub-committee to draw up, in conjunction with all women’s organisations, a survey on the ‘aborigines question’ which would be sent to every candidate standing for election to the state government.⁵⁴ In an unsourced and undated article in the Feminist Club records, Cameron states the Feminist Club was the *only* women’s organisation taking such a large role in the campaigns and making a ‘complete survey of the aborigines, their history and customs and the best way to save the best in their culture and develop it for Australian civilisation.’⁵⁵

The Feminist Club can be criticised for placing an overarching emphasis upon anthropology. It suggested Caroline Kelly as the representative of women’s groups for the Aboriginal Protection Board (who was incidentally the first woman appointed to a Select Committee), at a time where ‘anthropologists offered an alternative expertise that replaced biology with culture.’⁵⁶ However, what is most marked about the Feminist

⁵² Quoted in Horner, *Vote Ferguson*, p.54.

⁵³ Quoted in Horner, *Vote Ferguson*, pp.54-5.

⁵⁴ ‘Women’s Protest: Abandonment of Inquiry: Treatment of Aborigines’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18/2/1938.

⁵⁵ Unsourced article, ‘Feminists Urge Inquiry: Aborigines’ Story of Is Rations’, Feminist Club ML MSS 1703/K21801.

⁵⁶ Stuart Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.185-6.

Club's involvement is their association with the APA. It was reported on 10 October 1939 that at a meeting of the APA it was Cameron who seconded the motion for full social justice for Australian Aborigines.⁵⁷ In reading a report of the Aboriginal Conference held at Dubbo in March 1940 a motion was carried by the Feminist Club that 'the President write to the Association for the Protection of Native Races, bringing out points stressed by Miss Hamblin in her presentation of the Report.'⁵⁸ The Feminist Club's involvement is markedly different from the UA. In response to the CACR's urgings to take action following increased pregnancy rates of 'half caste girls in Darwin following 'the influx of soldiers' the UA 'decided not to do anything further in this way as we are trying to have Mrs Kelly appointed to the Board.'⁵⁹ The involvement of the Feminist Club in Indigenous affairs was not so narrow.

Conclusion

Members of the Feminist Club gained an understanding of Aboriginal people through their domestic servants, yet this knowledge provided the platform for a wider interest. Joan Kingsley-Strack a prominent example.⁶⁰ This was in contrast to the UA who suggested a policy to improve the condition of Aboriginal people, in which 'they should be educated and trained to help on farms as the shortage of domestic workers is so acute.'⁶¹ There were shortcomings in the Feminist Club's approach. It did not endorse a resolution forwarded by Kingsley-Strack for citizenship rights. It continued to support

⁵⁷ Minutes of executive meeting 10/10/1939, FC, ML MSS 1703/K2197.

⁵⁸ Minutes of executive meeting 19/3/1940, FC, ML MSS 1703/K2197.

⁵⁹ Minutes of executive meeting 25/7/1940, UA, ML MSS 2160/427-Y4477.

⁶⁰ See Haskins, *One Bright Spot*.

⁶¹ Minutes of executive meeting 18/5/1939, UA, ML MSS 2160/427-Y4477.

Kelly for appointment to the Welfare Board despite protestations from Ferguson at the Select Committee Inquiry that ‘Mrs Kelly is in no way connected with the administration of the Aborigines Protection Board I must respectfully decline to answer any question.’⁶² From this perspective the Feminist Club did not, therefore, present a radical stance on Indigenous Rights. It did lobby for other feminist interest in Indigenous rights and promoted a dialogue with Indigenous peoples and had at least some perception of Aboriginal people as rights holders rather than mere welfare recipients – a view not evident elsewhere. Such a role has not been given due recognition. Through involvement in the Select Committee Inquiry the Feminist Club also voiced its dissatisfaction with parliamentarians. They sought to establish themselves as a socially aware and active group. The Feminist Club brought issues of Indigenous women within the framework of interest of middle class white women. In the 1940s, however, concerns of Indigenous rights started to be displaced.

⁶² 1937 New South Wales Select Committee Enquiry into the Administration of the Aboriginal Protection Board, Joint Volumes Parliamentary Papers, 1938/39/40, p.670.

Chapter Three – The 1940s: Winning the Peace

'If we are to win through to any better design for living, we must work in unity for a common purpose, with a common faith, setting a pattern that will be good for our children to follow. Cannot our common faith be – Faith in Australia? Our purpose – striving to be worthy of her?'

*Australian Women's Digest, 1945*¹

Jill Roe asserts that 'the relationship between women and nationalism has seldom been straightforward.'² The 1940s proves no exception. In chapter two I argued that the feminist movement in the 1930s sought to illustrate that 'women's issues' were a political matter. With a non-discriminatory ethic the Feminist Club challenged the control of the NSW state government. In the 1940s feminists started to assert that women had a role in shaping the nation more broadly. This belief developed during the expansion of women's activities during the Second World War and in the hopes held for peace-time reconstruction. This chapter explores the response of the feminist movement to the advent of war in Australia, and the divergence that emerged due to differing conceptions of national duty in times of crisis. I locate Indigenous rights as a central feature of a response by the women's movement to the pressure of war, where women sought a constructive role in society. The Australian Woman's Charter (AWC) held an interest in shaping the national character and sought to galvanise women's involvement in a dialogue of both national and international rights. Aboriginal rights were integral to this non-discriminatory and just national ideal to be shaped by the hands of women. Furthermore, I argue that the schism within the Feminist movement that emerged in the 1940s increasingly became polarised along political lines.

¹ 'Design for the Future?' *Australian Women's Digest*, vol. 1., no. 1., February 1945.

² Jill Roe, 'What has Nationalism Offered Australian Women?' in Norma Grieve and Alisa Burns (eds.), *Australian Women: Contemporary Feminist Thought*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.29.

Ideological differences emerged in the feminist movement in the 1940s when feminists sought, in a larger capacity, to shape the national framework. This aim emerged from the context of war, rather than from increasing socialist association as argued by Sekules. ³ A divide in the feminist movement in Sydney therefore occurs later than has been asserted by Griffith, Simic and Sekules and was due to differences in how feminist organisations related to the nation. An institutional study illustrates how a radicalisation occurred with some feminist organisations adopting left-wing identity. They challenged the boundaries of the nation in a new vision for peacetime society. The Feminist Club still sought to make its contribution to the nation, but in wartime restricted itself to working still within the framework of existing structures. Alternatively, the UA aimed for a larger role for women in a re-shaping of the nation which it believed must eventually take place with the advent of peace.

A study of the campaign for Indigenous rights in the 1940s involves many complexities. Organisational agitation was undermined by the advent of war and an extension of power of the new Aborigines Welfare Board. An example is that in 1941, the Welfare Board requested the assistance of local government authorities in concentrating Aboriginal people in reserves. ⁴ Forced reallocation made organisational activity difficult. However, the context of war provided a strong language of protest for Indigenous activists. William Ferguson wrote to the Premier of NSW in March 1940 simply stating that ‘the young men of our race are fighting with the armies of the British

³ Sekules, *Jessie Street*, p.47.

⁴ Heather Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, (NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1996), p.26

Empire for democracy, therefore we suggest that your Government must grant our people full democratic rights.⁵ Pearl Gibbs had a son involved in the war,⁶ one of the 1,000 people of Aboriginal descent who fought with the Second AIF.⁷ She argued that, ‘we the Aborigines are proving to the world that we are not only helping to protect Australia but also the British Empire.’⁸ The context of war brought forward a means of Indigenous protest, and the feminist movement utilised the expectations of peace to assert a necessity to listen to these voices.

Aboriginal affairs were a low priority for the government throughout the war, but some changes did, nonetheless, take place. In 1941, Commonwealth Child Endowment was made available to Aboriginal families who were not nomadic or dependent on government support, and a year later Commonwealth Invalid and Old Age Pensions were paid to people of Aboriginal descent living off reserves. The policy of assimilation had been canvassed in the late 1930s, but A.P. Elkin found justification for this policy from the war. He asserted that the war illustrated Aboriginal people did not have an inferior character but that they would only act in an inferior manner if this is the expectation put on them.⁹ Elkin proposed that government policy must aim for ‘full citizenship, with all its rights and privileges and responsibilities – for all persons of Aboriginal descent.’¹⁰

⁵ W. Ferguson to Premier A. Mair, 11 March 1940, JKS, NLA MS 9661 box 11.

⁶ Pearl Gibbs, letter in *Daily Telegraph*, 12 January 1947, Pearl Gibbs Collection (PG), Mitchell Library (ML), MSS 6922/3.

⁷ Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Australians: Black Response to White Dominance 1788-1980*, (NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1982), pp.168-9.

⁸ Pearl Gibbs, 2GB radio broadcast 1941, reprinted in Kevin Gilbert, *Because a White Man will never do it*, (Brisbane: Angus & Robertson, 1973), p.16.

⁹ A.P. Elkin, *Citizenship for Aborigines: A National Aboriginal Policy*, (Sydney: Australasian Publishing Company co. Pty. Ltd., 1944), p.27.

¹⁰ Elkin, *Citizenship for Aborigines*, p.43.

Elkin asserted the necessity to remove racial prejudice and change unsatisfactory living conditions for Aboriginal people, however, he also advocated the right for the government to remove Aboriginal children from their homes. Under Elkin's policy 'the Australian Aborigine is to have a 'new deal', where 'the detribalised native, who represents the major problem of native administration, will be educated to take his place in white society.'¹¹ This notion gained ascendancy in the 1940s. However, no gain was made in the attainment of civil rights. In 1944, the government posed a referendum to transfer fourteen additional powers to the Federal government for the duration of war and the following five years. One of these was federal control of Aboriginal people. The respondent had to vote 'yes' or 'no' to all proposed changes in the referendum. It was roundly defeated.¹² It was another twenty years before Aboriginal administration was again raised as a national issue.¹³

Women undertook a greater role in national service only when the threat to Australia appeared imminent. For the first two years of the war, the message propagated by then Prime Minister Robert Menzies was 'business as usual'. However, following the attacks at Pearl Harbour, Australia appeared to be in danger. Prime Minister Curtin broadcast to the nation on 8 December 1941; 'my appeal is to you in the name of Australia, for Australia is at stake in this contest.'¹⁴ At the outset of war, in February 1938 the Minister of Defence, G.A. Street asserted, 'it is considered that the general manpower available for the Armed Forces is sufficient to obviate any great

¹¹ 'A "New Deal" for the Aborigine', *Daily Telegraph*, 9/2/1939, FC, ML MSS 1703/K21801.

¹² Australian Bureau of Statistics, '1944 Referendum', www.abs.gov.au.

¹³ Horner, *Seeking Racial Injustice*, p.14.

¹⁴ Quoted in Michael McKernan, *All In! Fighting the War at Home*, (N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 1983), p.97.

demand for the utilisation of women's services in the way of substitution for men in the early states of war.¹⁵ However, on 15 December 1941, one week after the attacks on Pearl Harbour, the cabinet decided to approve 'as a war measure' the extension of female employment in lieu of men in service in order to meet the production levels needed for the war.¹⁶ In August 1941 the government announced a 'Women's Home Army' was to be formed to replace men in performing non combatant duties.¹⁷ By 1943 16,243 women had enlisted in women's services, and by the end of the war they were paid two-thirds of the male rate of pay.¹⁸

In 1992 Kay Saunders and Geoffrey Bolton asserted that 'to date, no detailed academic assessment of the totality of Australian Women's experiences in the Second World War has been published.'¹⁹ While more recently the role of war in the 'fashioning of gender identity' has been examined,²⁰ Saunders and Bolton sought to ameliorate the inadequacy of existing scholarship in a different fashion. They asserted that 'the mobilisation of women by the state requires close scrutiny before the issue of women mobilising among themselves can be broached.'²¹ Scholarship of this nature has not demonstrated that a dramatic change in the position of women was brought about by the war. Michael McKernan illustrated that women's work within war industries remained

¹⁵ Patsy Adam-Smith, *Australian Women at War*, (Victoria: Thomas Nelson Australia, 1994), p.139.

¹⁶ Adam-Smith, *Australian Women at War*, p.141.

¹⁷ McKernan, *All In!*, p.51.

¹⁸ Adam-Smith, *Australian Women at War*, pp.142-3.

¹⁹ Kay Saunders and Geoffrey Bolton, 'Girdled for War: Women's mobilisations in World War Two', in Kay Sanders and Raymond Evans (eds.), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, (Marickville, N.S.W.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), p.376.

²⁰ Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake, 'Introduction: Warfare, History and Gender', in Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake (eds.), *Gender and War in the Twentieth Century*, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.1.

²¹ Saunders and Bolton, 'Girdled for War', p.378.

much more domestic than military. In 1945 the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force comprised 18,000 women. Of these, 4,000 were engaged in signals and communication work, 3,000 were cooks or mess stewardesses.²² The conclusion drawn is that a woman's role was to primarily support men.²³ Furthermore, 'the ideology of women's central vocation in the private arena with more limited engagement in the public sphere, was not challenged and reformulated – just modified.'²⁴ Lynn Beaton similarly undermines a notion of a dramatic impact of women's involvement in wartime. She asserted that it was important to the nation only as a cheap source of labour.²⁵

An examination of how women mobilised amongst themselves during the Second World War has not been taken. This study provides an insight into the way in which the women's movement sought to negotiate an uncertain political environment. A focus on mobilisation within the feminist movement allows for an assessment of an evolving feminist movement whose interests in Indigenous affairs were broadcast in a national agenda. In the 1940s, an interest in Indigenous rights did not emerge from the domestic sphere to illustrate the political currency of women's issues, as in the 1930s, but Aboriginal affairs were prominent in a revision of the shape of the nation provided by the AWC. A program of Indigenous rights in the 1940s had wider, national, consequences.

²² McKernan, *All In!*, p.129.

²³ Joy Damousi, 'Marching to Different Drums – Women's Mobilisations, 1914-1939', in Kay Sanders and Raymond Evans (eds.), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, (Marickville, N.S.W.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), p.355.

²⁴ Saunders and Bolton, 'Girdled for War', p.395.

²⁵ Lynn Beaton, 'The importance of women's paid labour: Women at work in World War II', in Margaret Bevege, Margaret James and Carmel Shute, *Worth Her Salt: Women at work in Australia*, (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1982), p.98.

The Feminist Club of New South Wales in the 1940s

In the 1940s the Feminist Club's conservative nature was exhibited in an affirmation of all government policies. Rather than attempt to shape the nation it merely sought to contribute to its stability, and reflecting this, a platform of Indigenous rights disappeared. The context of war was central to this change. In 1935 the President of the Feminist Club, Norma Cameron asserted that 'war is essentially a woman's question. If anyone can stop it, it is the women of the world.'²⁶ Yet from the outbreak of the Second World War any notion promoting peace was clearly absent from Cameron's thoughts as the Feminist Club rallied to support the war effort. Cameron wrote to all members in September 1939 to inform them that 'since the beginning of the year the Club Rooms have been granted, free, on 160 occasions for the training of women in First Aid, Home Nursing and Air Raid Precautions and over 600 women have gained their certificates in these classes.'²⁷ In November of the same year Cameron wrote again to Club members:

We know that you are being called upon in every direction to help at this time of National emergency, but we are anxious that the Club shall retain its position as one of the foremost women's organisations ready to do its part when called upon.²⁸

A patriotic image during times of war was clearly important to the Feminist Club.

The activities of many women's organisations were shaped by the war, however, not all reacted in the same spirit as the Feminist Club. The UA only supported the war effort as they believed 'the horrors of war are less than the horrors of Nazism and

²⁶ 'Women and War: Support of the League', 3/9/1935, FC, ML MSS 1703/K2180.

²⁷ Mrs P.A. Cameron to Joan Kingsley-Strack, 28/9/1939, JKS, NLA MS 9661, box 11.

²⁸ The Feminist Club of New South Wales, open letter to members, 8 November 1939, JKS, NLA MS 9661, box 5.

Fascism, which deprive all citizens, particularly women, of all liberty and justice.’²⁹ To uphold this justification for war the UA then illustrated a concern for the character of Australia to be based on ideals of liberty and justice. Support for the war, and the attempt to make contribution towards Australia’s effort was not, for the UA, synonymous with unquestioning acceptance of government actions. The Feminist Club supported the internment of ‘enemy aliens’ and urged the government ‘to intern all enemy aliens and at a later date when the situation clears, it might then be possible to release those whose loyalty can definitely be counted on.’³⁰ When the government banned seven organisations that it deemed to be subversive due to communist affiliations, the Feminist Club ‘instead of entertaining protest on this matter,’ as had the UA, wanted to ‘congratulate the Government on the stand it has taken to protect democratic rights of all people of Australia.’³¹ In July 1940 the Club suspended its affiliation with the AFWV stating that ‘the club is so actively engaged in war effort that the members find it difficult to find time, energy and finance for the many meetings of the NSW committee.’³² Eventually the war activities led the Feminist Club to dissociate themselves from other women’s organisations; preoccupation with the war effort was again the reason cited for not sending delegates to a Women’s Forum organised by Jessie Street in 1941.³³

The Feminist Club not only began to withdraw from involvement with other women’s organisations, but also support of basic feminist principles. In July 1940, the UA resolved to write to the Women’s Australian National Service (WANS), seeking

²⁹ ‘Women Disclaim Anti-War Motion’, *Daily Telegraph*, 14/3/1941.

³⁰ Minutes of executive meeting 7/6/1940, FC, ML MSS 1703/K21797.

³¹ Minutes of executive meeting 11/6/1940, ML MSS 1703/K21797.

³² Minutes of executive meeting, 9/7/1940, ML MSS 1703/K21797.

³³ Minutes of executive meeting, 10/6/1941, ML MSS 1703/ K21797.

assurance that 'women shall be engaged under the same conditions and awards as govern such work at the time, and that the policy of equal pay and equal opportunity for men and women shall be generally adopted throughout these occupations.'³⁴ The Feminist Club did not agree. In a response to this agitation for equal pay they wrote:

During our 28 years of existence we have worked for this policy, but with the enemy at the gates of Australia we consider this is neither the time nor the place to be haggling over whether women should receive a few pieces of silver more than they are getting at present.

We are satisfied that the Government will act in the best interests of all sections of the community and such anomalies as exist will, in our opinion, be remedied after hard-won victory.³⁵

The Feminist Club's involvement in war time activities and its affirmation of government policy was the primary reason for its isolation from the feminist agenda promoted by the UA.

When the war came to a close, the activities of the Feminist Club ceased to have a purpose. From June 1940, the Feminist Club started a monetary collection to provide the Commonwealth government with an interest free loan for the duration of the war. It started by donating £50.³⁶ By May 1944, they had raised £5,460, and proudly posted in their minute book the award given them by the War Loans and National Savings Campaign.³⁷ Social functions, plays and musicals were held to raise money. As a result the social committee came to dominate the Feminist Club. The days of deputations of ministers, and lobbying the press on women's matters were over. When the war came to an end, the Feminist Club no longer had a forward-looking, progressive, agenda. In its

³⁴ Minutes of executive meeting, 8/7.1940, UA, ML MSS 2160/427-Y4477.

³⁵ Undated article in minutes of Executive Meeting, 11/11/1941, FC, ML MSS 1703/ K21797.

³⁶ Minutes of executive meeting, 4/6/40, FC, ML MSS 1703/ K21797.

³⁷ Minutes of executive meeting, 30/5/1944, FC, ML MSS 1703/ K21797.

34th annual report in 1948 the most prominent achievements listed by the Feminist Club were being a platform representative at Empire Day, and part of a deputation to the Prime Minister organised by the Women's Movement Against Socialisation. By 1951 the loss of political initiative is evident; 'the year under review has been a typically post-war year – one of doubts, problems and difficulties, but nevertheless the club has been able to maintain its tradition of cultural achievement and service.'³⁸ The language is markedly different from that lauded at its Silver Jubilee. By the 1950s the Feminist Club was self-consciously a cultural organisation. Its activities during the war explain this shift.

Without a specific concern for civil rights, concern for the Aboriginal population disappeared. The Feminist Club in the 1930s claimed an involvement in Indigenous rights campaigns that outstripped any other civic organisation. It maintained interest in the welfare of Aborigines until 1941, as reflected by its discussions with anthropologist Olive Pink. Cameron, Scobie and Kingsley-Strack planned, unsuccessfully, to join her on a trip to Alice Springs.³⁹ However, from late 1941 any involvement with Aboriginal affairs is absent from the Club's records, and it does not return. The Feminist Club forwarded a conception of nationalism which primary involved loyalty to the government with little time left over for non-war activities.

The United Associations and the Australian Women's Charter

The UA, sought to amplify women's role as national citizens both for the duration of the war and in its aftermath. When the Manpower Commission was established in

³⁸ 37th Annual Report, 28/2/1951, FC, ML MSS 1703/ K21797.

³⁹ Minutes of executive meeting, 5/11/1940, FC, ML MSS 1703/K21797.

1941 the UA wrote to the Minister for Labour to ask if any committee was being established to consider the role that women could play in the war effort.⁴⁰ Even during a national emergency the UA would not allow concerns of rights and opportunities for women to be overlooked. This is evident in the following subjects that it asked the Council for Women in War work to consider:

- 1) Policy regarding women in the services after the war
- 2) Policy regarding women industrial workers after the war
- 3) Policy regarding women skilled workers after the war
- 4) Equal pay after the war
- 5) Women's Employment Boards – working code for women.⁴¹

Mrs M. Warhurst proudly asserted in 1944 that the UA was a 'group of women who miss no new regulation or departure that might affect the status of women ...I may prove to you that the power of such an organisation is unlimited.'⁴² The UA during the war time was not primarily concerned in aiding the war effort. It viewed its responsibility in a different light, asserting that 'upon those who are not actively engaged in fighting to win the war falls the responsibility to win the peace.'⁴³

'Winning the peace' entailed planning for reconstruction and guaranteeing women a place in a newly shaped nation. Women were obliged to ensure that 'there must be no sex discrimination woven into the plans for reconstruction if they are to be acceptable to women.'⁴⁴ From 1943 the WANS changed their syllabus to 'Post-War

⁴⁰ Minutes of council meeting 4/12/1941, UA, ML MSS 2160/427-Y4477.

⁴¹ Minutes of executive meeting 18/2/1943, UA, ML MSS 2160/427-Y4477.

⁴² Broadcast 'Concerning the Woman's Charter of Australia', by Mrs M. Warhurst, Australian Women's Charter records (AWC), National Library of Australia (NLA) MS 2302.

⁴³ 'Editorial', *Australian Women's Digest*, vol. 1, no. 1, August 1944.

⁴⁴ 'Editorial', *Australian Women's Digest*, vol. 1, no. 1, August 1944.

Rehabilitation and Citizenship'.⁴⁵ It asserted that the sacrifices of women should not be forgotten or overshadowed by those being made by men. Street emphasised this point by comparing the role of a mother with that of a soldier, as 'any woman who is going to have a baby accepts what she knows to be an inevitable risk of losing her life.'⁴⁶

The UA seized upon women's employment during the war as collateral for post-war action, as it left 'nothing to be desired and proves conclusively that women thought of national problems objectively.'⁴⁷ A concern with national problems was evident in a conference in Melbourne in September 1944 entitled 'Women in the life of the Nation'. Mona Ravenscraft sums up the theme as, 'democracy and civilisation depend on truth and understanding...all must stand shoulder to shoulder, unmindful of past schisms and divided groups, to win for the future of the whole world permanent peace and progress.'⁴⁸ These dual aims of unity and peace were, a year earlier, reflected by the AWC, organised by Street and the UA. M. Warhurst asserts that the Charter gave 'evidence on every hand of the awakening and increasing interest of women in vital problems.'⁴⁹ The function of the AWC was to work 'to improve the economic, legal and social status of women and social conditions generally were assembled and tabulated for the first time.'⁵⁰ The AWC pioneered the notion held by the UA that 'if we are to win the peace it is necessary to

⁴⁵ Noelle Brennan, 'Active Service to Active Welfare', *Australian Women's Digest*, vol. 1., no.2. September 1944.

⁴⁶ Jessie Street, 'Army of Mothers', *Australian Women's Digest*, vol.1, no.3, October 1944.

⁴⁷ 'Editorial', *Australian Women's Digest*, vol.1, no.2, September 1944.

⁴⁸ Mona Ravenscraft, 'Co-operation – the keynote', *Australian Women's Digest*, vol.1, no.5, December 1944.

⁴⁹ M. Warhurst, broadcast on 'Concerning the Woman's Charter of Australia', 27/1/1944, AWC, NLA MS 2302.

⁵⁰ Australian Woman's Charter New South Wales Committee, 'Representations made by the Deputation from the Australian Women's Charter Committee to the Prime Minister of June 8th 1949, (Sydney, 1949), National Library of Australia, NLPf396.

plan for peace while carrying on the war.⁵¹ Its resolutions ranged from equal rights legislation, employment of women, rights for women as mothers to resolutions on alcohol, housing, moral standards and Aboriginal affairs.

The AWC's concern for Indigenous rights was incorporated within a new 'vision' for the nation. The 1943 Charter deplored 'the continued neglect of the native race and demands immediate measures by the Federal Government to arrest the process of extinction and to provide the Aborigines with all the means for a secure and prosperous life.'⁵² It advocated federal control over Aboriginal affairs, the provision of native reserves and the 'potential equality of the Aboriginal Race to be recognised.'⁵³ Indigenous rights were premised as an area in which women could demonstrate their full participation in the nation. The Charter wanted that 'women be urged to use their influence to eliminate colour prejudice from the social life of the nation.'⁵⁴

The co-operation amongst women's groups from all around the nation was the salient feature of the 1943 conference. The dissention surrounding the second Women's Charter Conference was indicative of a growing political polarisation within the feminist movement, which emerged in the 1940s. At the 1946 conference some women's groups protested against the claim of a unity of women's voices. Seven women's organisations,

⁵¹ Australian Woman's Charter 1943, reproduced in Heather Radi (ed.), *Jessie Street: Documents and Essays*, (NSW: Women's Redress Press Inc., 1990), pp.35-40.

⁵² Australian Woman's Charter 1943, in Radi, *Jessie Street*, p.39.

⁵³ *Australian Woman's Charter 1943*, in Radi, *Jessie Street*, p.40.

⁵⁴ *Australian Woman's Charter 1943*, in Radi, *Jessie Street*, p.40.

including the Feminist Club, refused to take part in the conference.⁵⁵ Whilst none of these organisations had attended the first Charter Conference in 1943, in 1946 they felt it necessary to take a public stance. They stated that ‘we feel that our own methods, through unspectacular, are more likely to achieve success in matters affecting the well being of women and children’ and in their opinion the Charter was ‘neither sponsored nor supported by the great majority of women’s organisations in Australia.’⁵⁶

The 1946 Charter had a more prominent left-wing agenda. The 1946 conference concluded with ‘an historic Peace Procession’ where ‘women banded together to demonstrate for peace by marching in a public procession through the streets of the city.’⁵⁷ These women were not celebrating peace, but demonstrating for peace. This is an important distinction as in the post-war context the peace movement was starting to be popularly aligned with pro-Soviet tendencies. By contrast, in this period the Feminist Club became involved in the right-wing initiative of the Women’s Movement Against Socialisation, led by Millicent Preston-Stanley Vaughn. The UA was fighting off accusations of communist affiliations. The *Sydney Morning Herald* denoted the UA as ‘on the left of the recognised women’s organisations in New South Wales’ and as being amongst organisations in which ‘the nomination of “fellow travellers” as officials or to executive committees has often been made easy by the political naiveté and sheer gullibility of culture-conscious rank and file.’⁵⁸ The UA denied the paper’s allegations,

⁵⁵ The other organisations were the National Council of Women, Sydney Business and Professional Women’s Club, Country Women’s Association of NSW, Christian Temperance Union of NSW, Women’s Voluntary Services of NSW and the Young Women’s Christian Association of Sydney.

⁵⁶ ‘Women Stand Aloof: Mrs J. Street’s Conference’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19/6/1946.

⁵⁷ Australian Woman’s Charter, *Second Charter Conference Resolutions*, (August 4-11, 1946, Sydney), National Library of Australia (NLA), NLP396AUS.

⁵⁸ ‘How Communism is Infiltrating Cultural Organisations’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24/8/1948.

asserting that ‘members have been frequently invited to attend council and executive meetings as observers so a greater knowledge is gained.’⁵⁹ Despite protestations, it’s affiliation with the left stuck.

The second AWC in 1946 held an increased interest in Indigenous affairs. The resolutions on the issue were double those in 1943. Two issues are pertinent; an extended recognition of Indigenous workers rights, and an affirmation of some aspects of Aboriginal self-determination. The 1943 Charter had been concerned with the rights of Aboriginal people as workers, demanding ‘the abolition of the system of employment by licence; the Aboriginal worker to be entitled to receive the full amount of his or her wages as a legal right.’⁶⁰ Three years later the language was more strident, and a criticism of the nation stronger. It was alleged that ‘the conditions under which they labour in many parts of the country leaves Australia open to the charge of slave labour.’⁶¹

The second AWC’s concern with Indigenous rights transcended the centrality of white female protectors of Aborigines, which had long been the stalwart of the feminist campaign. Lake notes that that the eighteen resolutions pertaining to Aboriginal affairs drew upon the extensive work by female activists of the previous decades. These included Mary Bennett, Constance Cook and Ada Bomham.⁶² This point is important for the establishment of a genealogy of white female involvement in Indigenous affairs. The difference exhibited in 1946, however, was that Aboriginal affairs was conceptualised as

⁵⁹ Minutes of executive meeting, 26/8/1948, UA, ML MSS 2160/427-Y4477.

⁶⁰ *Australian Woman’s Charter 1943*, in Radi, *Jessie Street*, p.40.

⁶¹ *Australian Woman’s Charter, Second Charter Resolutions*, NLA NLP396AUS.

⁶² Lake, *Getting Equal*, p.195.

part of an extensive plan of national reform. In this plan, women had an integral role as those 'who have opportunities for wider education, should be the first to recognise and condemn the evils and injustice of race discrimination.'⁶³ The AWC urged the Government to accept 'the Native right to organise and appoint representatives of their own choosing who shall have the right of entry to all places where aboriginals and coloured people are employed' and for parity in wages.⁶⁴ Furthermore, they called for Indigenous participation in 'spiritual, cultural, political and economic life of the country,' a need for magistrates to have knowledge of Aboriginal customs and recognition of equal parental rights for Aborigines and all other races.⁶⁵

Indigenous rights were starting to emerge as a party political matter, as for example in Sawtell's speech to the APA conference in December 1940 when he said:

I strongly advise that your organisation support the Labour Party at the next state election. The welfare of aborigines should not be a matter of party politics, but our social system being what it is these grave social problems have to be fought out politically. The UAP will never do anything for the aborigines.⁶⁶

The 1930s witnessed an early identification of Indigenous peoples as rights holders due to their role as workers. The CACR urged that in addition to a woman's representative on the Aboriginal Protection Board, the trade unions should also be represented as 'many aborigines are members of trade unions, which protect their members, but aborigines

⁶³ 'Our choice – Brotherhood or Chaos', *Australian Women's Digest*, vol.1. no.10, May 1945.

⁶⁴ *Australian Woman's Charter 1943*, in Radi, *Jessie Street*, p.224.

⁶⁵ *Australian Woman's Charter, Second Charter Resolutions*, NLA NLP396AUS.

⁶⁶ Speech delivered by Michael Sawtell to conference of the Aborigines Progressive Association, 31/12/1940, JKS, NLA MS 9661, box 11

directly under the care of the A P Board are shamefully treated and exploited'.⁶⁷ These interests were adopted by the AWC as part of its a program of nation-building.

Where women saw their opportunity to build the nation in peace time, they sought to justify a war against fascism by promoting a nation with a non-discriminatory national ethic. Countering discrimination against Aboriginal Australians and allowing for appreciation of cultural difference was important. This was a view that gained ground between the two AWC conferences and became firmly entrenched in the following years. The NSW Charter Committee wrote to William Ferguson in 1949 informing him of a discussion to be held on the Aboriginals and Coloured Peoples, drawing his attention to the resolutions of the 1946 Australian Woman's Charter. The Committee similarly invited the Trades and Labour Council to send a speaker to discuss Indigenous peoples rights as workers. Furthermore, the Committee started to approach Aboriginal activists directly for advice. Having noted a group who intending to stand at the next Federal election the Committee contacted Ferguson stating 'we would be grateful if you could arrange for a member of this group to be present at our Forum to speak on the subject which we feel is of vital importance to the welfare of Aborigines.'⁶⁸

The AWC's support for Indigenous rights was enacted at a time when there was little political currency in Aboriginal affairs. Horner asserts that the issue of civil rights for Aboriginal Australians was lost under the proposal for a rocket range stretching from South Australia to the north of Western Australian where 'the campaign for Aboriginal

⁶⁷ CACR letter to Chief Secretary, 11th July, 1938, JKS, NLA MS 9661, box 11.

⁶⁸ Letter to W. Ferguson, 18 March 1949, AWC, NLA MS 2302.

rights and Aboriginal protests against the rocket range became inextricably linked in the minds of the politicians.’⁶⁹ The policy of assimilation remained on the political platform. Support for Indigenous rights by women’s organisations remained important just at a time when it was beginning to be overshadowed by other emerging national issues.

Conclusion

In the 1940s the UA maintained a prominent voice for women’s rights, while the Feminist Club perceived its duty in passive co-operation with the government in a time of national-crisis. By the war’s end the Feminist Club had lost their feminist credentials just as they had dropped their support for Indigenous rights. By contrast, eradicating inequality of the sexes for the UA was the fundamental imperative of the war. Only with an end to discrimination ‘can we hope to establish the freedom for which this war has been waged.’⁷⁰ For the AWC the concept of anti-discrimination applied not just to women but was inseparable from a just approach to Aboriginal rights. In the concept of ‘winning the peace’ Indigenous rights were projected on a new national agenda, whereas in the 1930s the main protest was against the state apparatus in control of Aboriginal people. The Feminist Club did interact with the APA in the 1930s, but interaction was isolated to individual members, who then reported back to the organisation. In the 1940s a greater affiliation with Indigenous activists was sought by the AWC. The voice of Indigenous claims was becoming less distorted.

⁶⁹ Horner, *Seeking Racial Justice*, p.15.

⁷⁰ ‘Our choice – Brotherhood or Chaos’, *Australian Women’s Digest*, vol.1, no.10, May 1945.

Women held onto their organisations and perceived them as fundamental in shaping the nation for the end of the war. As Ann Tansy asserted, ‘if we hand over our organisations, there is a great danger that we shall fall back into the general apathy and indifference to the wider implications of the women’s questions and then the women of the democratic world have lost all for which they fought so hard.’⁷¹ A strong organisational presence projected an image of female interest in political problems, and represented a means for a solution of these along national non-discriminatory, democratic, lines. In the 1950s these aims started to be asserted through a dialogue of internationalism which undermined an overarching concern with nationalism.

⁷¹ Ann K. Tansy, ‘No Need for Women’s Organisations’, *Australian Women’s Digest*, vol 2., no.6, May 1946.

Chapter Four: The 1950s – A Second Wave

'The time was ripe for action – for a second wave to follow the upsurge of the 1930s, a wave that would bring about real change.'

Faith Bandler.¹

In the previous chapters this thesis has demonstrated that Indigenous rights were a platform of feminist organisations which in the 1930s and 1940s were at the forefront of the movement in Sydney – the largest and most vocal feminist organisations. These organisations were progressive in their context in the manner in which they challenged the boundaries for female action in the public political realm. In the 1930s the Feminist Club aimed to secure women's election to parliament and to assert the political nature of 'women's issues'. In the 1940s the United Associations of Women justified their support for the war in the development of an agenda to 'win the peace' and the Australian Woman's Charter outlined a new national feminist vision which emphasised a non-discriminatory national ethic. This chapter demonstrates that alignment of progressive feminism with Indigenous rights activism was maintained in the 1950s, in a new form, with a socialist outlook.

Katharine Susannah Prichard asserted 'all progressive women's organisations urge better education, health facilities and housing for Aborigines.'² She was specifically referring the Union of Australian Women (UAW). In the UAW, for the first time, Indigenous women were conceptualised within the mainstream concept of women's rights and asked to join the organisation. This was the new development of feminist interest in Indigenous affairs in the 1950s, which was premised on a socialist

¹ Faith Bandler and Len Fox (eds.), *The Time was Ripe: A history of the Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship*, (NSW: Alternative Publishing Co-operative Ltd., 1983), pp.51-2.

² Katharine Susannah Prichard, *Straight Left: Articles and Addresses on Politics, Literature and Women's Affairs over almost 60 years from 1910-1968*, collected and introduced by Rich Throssell, (Sydney: Wild & Woolley, 1982), p.258.

framework of female unity, which did not restrict itself to national borders. The UAW held a feminist outlook that undermined nationalism in an internationalist outlook.

The formation of the AAF in 1956, the first inter-racial Indigenous rights body, demonstrated a continuum in both Indigenous rights campaigns and feminist involvement in Aboriginal affairs from the 1930s. In chapter one I outlined prominent white female voices in campaigns for Indigenous rights. The influence of these women was still felt in the 1950s. In 1958 the AAF ordered numerous copies of Ada Bromham's *The First Australians and the New Australians* and Mary Bennett's *Human Rights for Australian Aborigines*. Both these women were at the Adelaide Conference, where FCAATSI was formed in 1958. Lake asserts that this 'points to the longevity and importance of these women's networks to campaign for Aboriginal rights', which stretched back to the 1930s.³ This is undoubtedly true. These networks in the 1950s were, however, of a different character.

To illuminate the differences in 1950s this chapter explores the complexities of the era to establish a strong collective identity for women that emerged from a conservative political context. Both feminist organisations and the AAF worked within the parameters of this context and consequently activism became entwined with concerns of respectability, even for those organisations adhering to dissident ideologies of socialism and communism. This chapter demonstrates that through examination of a new development in feminist concern in Indigenous affairs it is

³ Marilyn Lake, *Faith: Faith Bandler, Gentle Activist*, (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2002), pp.82-3.

possible to place the 1950s in ‘the history of the emergence and project of second-wave feminism.’⁴

In the 1950s a left-leaning rights coalition was becoming more visible than in the 1940s. Jack Horner was first introduced to the campaign for Aboriginal rights by attending their public meeting at Sydney Town Hall in 1957. He asserts that ‘it was relatively easy to ascertain that the audience who had come to support Aboriginal people that day was made up of pacifists, concerned churchmen, trade union members, old-style ‘lefties’, Labour Party members and feminists.’⁵ Heather Goodall asserted that until the late 1960s both the Right and the Left shared an interest in Aboriginal politics.⁶ Aboriginal rights movements involving Aboriginal people themselves were, however, characterised by the politics of the left.

Organisations of the left listened to Indigenous voices and become active in the rights campaign. The AAF held a non-party platform but believed that the Labor Party must support a campaign for Indigenous rights because ‘the ALP plans a better life for the working-class. The Aborigines belong to the working-class... The Labor Party should therefore have a working policy to help the Aborigines of NSW.’⁷ This political alignment was emerging, yet activism still emphasised co-operation and shared campaigns regardless of political alignment.⁸ Respectability was also a concern for political activism. This is illustrated by Barbara Curthoys as she outlined

⁴ Lesley Johnson, *The Modern Girl: Girlhood and Growing Up*, (NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1993), p.4.

⁵ Horner, *Seeking Racial Justice*, p.21.

⁶ Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, p.9.

⁷ Federal leader of the Labor Party, H.V. Evatt in 1958 declared ‘the privileges and standards no enjoyed by Australians will be extended to Aboriginal peoples on the basis of common citizenship,’ quoted in ‘An Aboriginal Policy for Australian Labor Party’, Aboriginal Australian Fellowship Records (AFF), Mitchell Library (ML) MSS 4057/6.

⁸ Simic, ‘A Hall of Selected Mirrors’, p.225.

the central problem for the UAW; ‘was it possible for one organisation to combine militant action with respectable housewifely concerns?’⁹ Necessitated by the context, this combination became the aim.

Negotiating the 1950s

The 1950s poses myriad complexities. Marilyn Lake asserts of Faith Bandler that ‘it was one of Faith’s great talents that she was able to combine the work entailed in being a consummate modern wife, mother and hostess with the escalating demands of her political commitments.’¹⁰ This image of domesticity, a return of women to the home after the Second World War, has been popular image of the 1950s. Here political activism necessitated recognition of domestic commitments. In the 1950s the modern housewife emerged. A discussion of women’s role in society in this period has been heavily influenced by Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*, where she explored women’s dissatisfaction with their domestic role - ‘the problem with no name.’ She asserted that ‘not long ago, women dreamed and fought for equality, their own place in the world.’¹¹ These goals had seemingly disappeared in the suburban confines of the 1950s. There was a growth in suburbanisation in the 1950s. This was not an accidental side-product, but a purposeful initiative of Menzies. Following the Second World War suburbia came to be seen as the manifestation of the Australian spirit.¹²

⁹ Barbara Curthoys and Audrey McDonald, *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade*, (Sydney: Union of Australian Women, 1997), p.15. The first half of this book deals with activities pre-1970, and the second half post-1970. The first half, which is relevant to my study is written by Barbara Curthoys, therefore I reference Curthoys rather than the two authors.

¹⁰ Lake, *Faith*, p.53.

¹¹ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, (Victoria: Penguin Books, 1965), p.33.

¹² Tim Rowse, ‘Heaven and a Hills hoist: Australian critics on suburbia’, in Richard White and Penny Russell (eds.), *Memories and Dreams: Reflections on Twentieth Century Australia: Pastiche II*, (NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1997), p.219.

Recent historiography of the 1950s has complicated a popular image of female domesticity. Norman MacKenzie, in the first history of women in Australia in 1962, illustrated that in the 1950s nearly all women married and had children.¹³ This period, however, was one of change for many Australian women. Between 1947 and 1961 the number of married women in the workforce increased four-fold. In 1950 the Arbitration court increased women's pay to 75% of the male basic wage.¹⁴ MacKenzie asserted that a tension appeared with a continuation of traditional attitudes towards women alongside an increased female presence in the workforce.¹⁵ A revised historiography, however, has questioned whether an emphasis on the home life was synonymous with a withdrawal from the public sphere. John Murphy asserts that it was a domestic image which shaped ideals about citizenship.¹⁶ This, Judith Brett argues, is a Liberal Party concept used to span the distinction between the public and private sphere.¹⁷ Notions of domesticity were about a certain set of values, rather than the actual activities of women.¹⁸

Challenging the picture of the 'house-bound' woman by imbuing her with the virtues of citizenship expands a picture of women's rights and scope for political action. Rather than conflicting values rendering an ambivalent attitude towards women, as argued by MacKenzie, ironically, housewives gained a greater political currency than they had ever before enjoyed. The UAW started to exploit this. Lesley

¹³ Norman MacKenzie, *Women in Australia*, (Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney: F.W. Cheshire, 1962), p.79.

¹⁴ MacIntyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, p.216.

¹⁵ MacKenzie, *Women in Australia*, p.96.

¹⁶ John Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, (NSW: Pluto Press, 2000), p.1.

¹⁷ Judith Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class: From Alfred Deakin to John Howard*, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.59.

¹⁸ Judith Brett, *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People*, (N.S.W.: Macmillan Australia, 1992), p.53.

Johnson refers to the 1950s as the ‘pre-history of second wave feminism’ where ‘a new political subject of identity; women seeking to speak in their own voice’ was produced.¹⁹ This sense of group identity was fostered by a consumer culture, which not only constructed a social identity for women, but a sense of cohesiveness. A retreat to the private realm rather than obscuring concepts of citizenship in the 1950s thus explains its character. The conservatism of the era is therefore indicative of the antecedents of profound social change.²⁰ This is true of both Indigenous rights and feminist goals.

The Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship

The AAF outlined the parameters of feminist involvement in Indigenous affairs through asserting the primacy of Indigenous activists and expectations of how to publicise the Aboriginal cause. To gain public support the AAF adopted a conciliatory approach to the white community. White involvement along similar lines of respectable activism was acceptable, but the compromise was a loss of Aboriginal members who emphasised white responsibility for the injustices experienced by Indigenous Australians.

The President of the AAF in 1958 Herbert S. Groves asserted that the primary function of the AAF was in ‘evaluating public attitudes, identifying policies and

¹⁹ Johnson, ‘Narratives of Feminism’, p.98.

²⁰ Stephen Alomes, Mark Dober and Donna Hellier, ‘The Social Context of Postwar Conservatism’, in Ann Curthoys and John Merritt (eds.), *Australia’s First Cold War: 1945-1953*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1984), p.27.

procedure with public interest, and executing a programme of action to earn public understanding and acceptance.²¹ The initial objectives agreed to were:

1. to capture wide public interest for Aboriginal rights
2. to find for ourselves the living conditions on and off reserves
3. to have Aborigines at work in the Executive
4. to be independent of any party or sectional interest in its policy.²²

In April 1957 the AAF organised a public meeting held at Sydney Town Hall. It was the first public meeting ever to be chaired by an Aboriginal person, and the largest meeting regarding Aboriginal affairs since the 'Day of Mourning' protest in 1938. At this meeting the petition for a referendum was launched to remove section 51 clause xxvi which removed Aborigines from federal jurisdiction, and section 127, excluding Aborigines from the Commonwealth census, from the Australian Constitution.

Jessie Street drafted the petition for the referendum that finally took place in 1967. Bandler recalls Street handing her the petition saying, 'well, there you go girl, go and get yourself a referendum.'²³ In the 1950s for the first time Indigenous people themselves were primarily involved in the campaign for Indigenous rights, but their approach isolated many Aboriginal people. Street's words were evidently maternalistic, yet they signalled that white activists were releasing control. The adaptation of the petition by FCAATSI and the publicity it received led to the hope of extended membership and the AAF becoming a 'TRULY ABORIGINAL ORGANISATION.'²⁴ Jean Horner, however, asserts that 'the main weakness of the AAF was that we did not have enough Aboriginal people working actively in the organisation and on the executive.'²⁵

²¹ President's Address to Annual General Meeting, 16/7/58, AAF, ML MSS 4057/1.

²² 1962 paper, AAF, ML MSS 4057/1

²³ Bandler and Fox, *The Time Was Ripe*, pp.11-12.

²⁴ 'The Fellowship is One Year Old', AAF, ML MSS 4057/1.

²⁵ Bandler and Fox, *The Time Was Ripe*, p.39.

A new pragmatism was evident in the campaign for Aboriginal rights in the 1950s. Assimilation was adopted as the official government policy in 1951. The government asserted that it is expected that all persons of Aboriginal blood or mixed blood in Australia will live like white Australians do.²⁶ The AAF adopted a goal to help with assimilation. In 1958 this was modified, recognising that it was premised upon disappearance of a distinct Aboriginal culture. The aim of integration was instead adopted.²⁷ Policy formation emphasised that ‘we must face realities’. Groves asserted that ‘the task of winning full acceptance and citizenship for all people of coloured blood is ahead of us; we cannot gain anything without the full co-ordination of all sections of the community.’²⁸ Pearl Gibbs’ approach to collaborative politics was fundamentally different from that finally adopted by the AAF. She declared, ‘I speak bitterly because I feel bitter. What about giving my people a fair go!’²⁹ There was no space in the AAF for such an approach. Gibbs was marginalised from the organisation that she had envisioned.

Expectations of a non-aggressive approach to the white community were also held to Anglo-Australian members of the AAF. Irene McIlraith was asked to resign from the AAF due to an aggressive attitude, following the circulation of a report of a trip of Walgett for which she had not received the Board’s approval. The Fellowship saw her comments as inflammatory. The report asked:

WHAT HAS AUSTRALIA DONE ABOUT ITS ORIGINAL
INHABITANTS SINCE 1945???

²⁶ Quoted in MacIntyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, p.221.

²⁷ Herbert S. Groves, ‘The Case for the Aborigines of NSW and the whole of the Commonwealth of Australia’, AAF, ML MSS 4057/1

²⁸ President’s address to the annual general meeting, July 1958, AAF, ML MSS 4057/1.

²⁹ Curthoys and MacDonald, *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade*, p.12.

By its treatment of its Aborigines Australia violates 19 clauses of the 30 contained in the Charter of Human Rights...

WHY? We ask HAS THE N.S.W GOVERNMENT and/or its respective Departments tolerated the practice of –

SEGREGATING ABORIGINAL CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS

SEGREGATING ABORIGINAL PATIENTS IN HOSPITALS

SEGREGATING ABORIGINES IN PICTURE THEATRES?????³⁰

These comments were believed to compromise the approach of the AAF. The support of white members was essential to engage with the white community. This dynamic of activism coupled with respectability was similarly visible with feminist organisations, and created space for an affiliation. By 1960 the AAF was affiliated with both the NSW chapter of the AWC and the UAW.

Feminism in the 1950s

The context of the Cold War was exploited by Menzies, and exacerbated by a recent legacy of deprivation and insecurity, fostered by an economic depression and two world wars. This had an impact on the feminist movement. Kate White asserts that the division in the women's movement was due to ideological differences which emerged in the Cold War context.³¹ Peter Sekules similarly notes a deepening division between 'progressive' and 'conservative' women's groups in this era.³² The 1945s is therefore perceived to have witnessed a demise in feminist unity. However collaboration amongst left wing feminist organisations grew in the 1950s. This was evident amongst the UA, the AWC and the UAW. They shared affiliation and many common members which included, at various times, Lucy Barnes, Jessie Street, Lucy Woodcock and Henrietta Greville. The common identity of women was defined by

³⁰ Report of I. McIlraith and Mrs Garland's Trip to Walgett (6-10/9/57), October 1957, AAF, ML MSS 4057/1.

³¹ White, 'Bessie Rischbieth, Jessie Street', p.329.

³² Sekules, *Jessie Street*, p.125.

the UA, which through a discourse of motherhood expressed both ‘the equality and exceptionalism of women.’³³ These organisations retained a feminist platform which in the 1950s emphasised non-discrimination and formal equality.³⁴

The feminist organisations seen as ‘progressive’ in the 1930s were no longer at the forefront of a campaign for Indigenous rights twenty years later. Over the three decades of my study a notion of a progressive organisation slides to the left of the political spectrum. In chapter two I focused upon the Feminist Club and the UA. By the 1950s these organisations were no longer spearheading the feminist movement in seeking a greater public role for women and publicising the principle of non-discrimination. In the 1950s Griffith asserts an absence of a feminist agenda rendered the Feminist Club merely a social organisation, with members often defecting to bowls clubs.³⁵ They held strong anti-communist sentiments, exhibited in their library which housed anti-socialist novels such as *The Socialist Tragedy*, *Tito and Goliath* and *Soviet Atomic Spies*.³⁶ The Feminist Club again came under the leadership of Millicent Preston-Stanley Vaughn, who was also the leader of the Women’s Movement Against Socialisation.

The UA was similarly witnessing a sharp membership decline, despite having maintained an interest in ‘women on bards, equal opportunities, jury service, equal pay, status of women, education, women in local government and parliament.’³⁷ The general meeting in 1951 there were over 70 members present, but this had dropped to

³³ Simic, ‘A Selected Hall of Mirrors’, p.243.

³⁴ Street, *Getting Equal*, p.206.

³⁵ Griffith, ‘The Feminist Club of NSW’, p.65.

³⁶ Griffith, ‘The Feminist Club of NSW’, p.64.

³⁷ United Associations of Women, *1960 Annual Report*, (Sydney, NSW: United Associations of Women, 1960), National Library of Australia, NQ396.06 UNI.

less than 50 by 1959.³⁸ The number of organisations affiliated with the UA had also dropped remarkably, and those retained were predominantly international bodies.³⁹ Winifred Mitchell comments that a conservative malaise had weakened the United Nations organisations which was ‘a reflection of the slackening of enthusiasm and hope in the 1950s.’⁴⁰ The UA’s involvement in these organisations preoccupied much of its energy and also displaced its positive outlook.

In the 1950s the AWC remained a visible civil organisation, but became increasingly preoccupied defending charges of communist affiliation.⁴¹ Unlike the Feminist Club and the UA, the AWC retained vocal support for Indigenous affairs. In March 1953 the NSW Charter Committee decided upon ‘a deputation later on to Canberra on Endowment, Aborigines etc.’⁴² The phrasing illustrates that at this time Aboriginal affairs was a stalwart of the AWC’s agenda. Its main concerns regarding Aboriginal affairs were housing, schools and the standard of living. The AWC sought a grass-roots approach and particularly concentrated on the Aborigines at La Perouse. They searched for representatives of Indigenous communities to come to AWC meetings, and Faith Bandler became a regular speaker. She conveyed the ‘great need for public recognition of aboriginal rights’ to counter a widespread ignorance regarding the injustice faced by Aboriginal people.⁴³ The AWC urged ‘Federal and State Governments to assume responsibility for better housing for those people and believes that communities where such aborigines live, should give neighbourly

³⁸ Mitchell, *Fifty Years of Feminist Achievement*, p.62.

³⁹ Organisations affiliated with the UA in 1960; The British Commonwealth League, The Open Door International, United Nations Association of Australia, Australian Women’s Charter, Status of Women Commission.

⁴⁰ Mitchell, *Fifty Years of Feminist Achievement*, p.62.

⁴¹ Simic, ‘A Hall of Selected Mirrors’, p.223.

⁴² Minutes of NSW Charter Committee meeting, 3/3/53 Australian Woman’s Charter Records (AWC), National Library of Australia (NLA) MS 2302.

⁴³ Fourth Federal Conference of the Australian Women’s Charter, 20th-21st November, 1959, AAF ML MSS 4057/6.

assistance and social acceptance, so that the old Australians may take their place in the Australian Nation.⁴⁴

The NSW Charter Committee supported the campaigns of the AAF and was responsive to its needs from its formation. The AWC in the 1950s accepted the direction by Aboriginal people in the Indigenous rights campaign. It provided funds for the AAF's first annual Children's Party, and followed their letter writing campaign to members of the Legislative Assembly, Legislative Council, Premier of NSW and Chairman of Aborigines' Welfare Board.⁴⁵ The AWC affiliated with the AAF in 1960. They sought 'representatives from the coloured people be asked to join a committee to discuss their affairs, as in this way perhaps we could discover what they (the coloured people) desired.'⁴⁶ However, unlike the UAW, they did not seek involvement of Indigenous women within a feminist campaign for women's rights. The UAW sought Indigenous women as members to aid the cause of all women. In this development of feminist interest in Indigenous affairs a radicalisation in the feminist movement is evident. The UAW held specifically socialist, rather than just left-wing tendencies, and was indicative of a pursuit of an international rather than national ethos to lobby for social change.

The Union of Australian Women

The UAW was formed in 1950, a breakaway group from the New Housewives Association, comprising mainly women from the ALP and Communist Party of Australia (CPA). The UAW provided a valuable outlet for women as their journal,

⁴⁴ Minutes of NSW Charter Committee meeting, 18/08/1953, AWC, NLA MS 2302.

⁴⁵ Minutes of NSW Charter Committee meeting, 15/10/57, AWC, NLA MS 2302.

⁴⁶ Minutes of NSW Charter Committee meeting, 1/4/52, AWC, NLA MS 2302.

Our Women was a rarity in providing a serious discussion of issues of women's lives in the 1950s.⁴⁷ In the 1950s most of the activities of the UAW were concerned with the standard of living of Australian society, and it argued for defence expenditure to be reallocated for domestic economic purposes.⁴⁸ To extend these concerns to all women the UAW utilised the subject-position 'housewife' in a new way, where housewives were conceptualised as workers. Murphy comments that in the 1950s 'it seemed the gap between domesticity and the public sphere was too great to bridge,' citing the failure of women's organisations to be consulted on government policy, and also in the failed initiative of the Housewives Association to establish a ministry of House-Keeping.⁴⁹ This comment overshadows an understanding of the way in which the UAW sought to characterise the domestic realm. Curthoys asserts that the UAW was distinct from other women's organisations because of a concern with working class women. This concern had led to a split with the Housewives' Association.⁵⁰ The UAW incorporated housewives in their definition of working women.⁵¹ It held a notion that in the post-war world 'the housewife no longer was just the woman who stayed at home and looked after the family.'⁵²

Simic asserts that the UAW was unique in creating a political identity which prevented a conflict between feminism and communism.⁵³ This cohesion overturned the fractured relationship between feminism and the CPA in the first half of the twentieth century, which had formed as feminism was seen to challenge working class

⁴⁷ Johnson, *Bread and Roses*, p.136.

⁴⁸ Curthoys and MacDonald, *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade*, p.17

⁴⁹ Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, p.44.

⁵⁰ Curthoys and MacDonald, *More Than a Hat and Glove Brigade*, p.1.

⁵¹ Union of Australian Women, *For the Rights of Women. Three Decades of Struggle, 1950-1980: 30th Anniversary*, Union of Australian Women, (Sydney: Union of Australian Women, 1980), p.4.

⁵² Union of Australian Women, *Handbook for Members*, (Sydney: Union of Australian Women, 197?), p.2.

⁵³ Simic, 'A Hall of Selected Mirrors', p.229.

unity.⁵⁴ The primary indication of the UAW's political leaning was its affiliation with the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), an organisation founded in Paris in 1945, at a conference attended by 850 women from 41 countries. Its appeal to a commonality of female experience was in the model of Soviet Internationalism.⁵⁵ This approach was visible at the World Congress of Women in 1953 which 'set out to work out ways in which women everywhere could act in unity to ensure to every woman the full employment of her rights and to every child security and well being, and to build a world in which humanity can live in peace.'⁵⁶ Women of all descriptions were asked to join the UAW as long as they aimed to deal 'with the problem of women and children.'⁵⁷ It was seen as 'heart warming' to 'know that there are women in every country in the world who are interested and active in the same things that we Australian women take so seriously.'⁵⁸

The potential of labour advancement models of the advancement of Aboriginal people had been demonstrated in strikes initiated by Don McLeod and Fred Walters.⁵⁹ The UAW celebrated these initiatives. The Pindan Co-operative, for example, was lauded as 'men and women live on terms of full equality with equal rates of pay. They have living quarters, mess rooms and share the kitchen and dining room duties on a roster system.'⁶⁰ They congratulated the Indigenous people in this co-operative

⁵⁴ Joy Damousi, *Women Come Rally! Socialism, Communism and Gender in Australia*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988), p.89.

⁵⁵ Simic, 'A Hall of Selected Mirrors', p.240.

⁵⁶ 'Women at Copenhagen', *Our Women: National Magazine of the Union of Australian Women*, August-September 1953.

⁵⁷ Curthoys and MacDonald, *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade*, p.12.

⁵⁸ 'Sincerely yours the editor', *Our Women: National Magazine of UAW*, May-March 1959.

⁵⁹ Peter Read, 'Aboriginal Rights', in Heather Radi (ed.), *Jessie Street: Documents and Essays*, (NSW: Women's Redress Press Inc., 1990), p.261.

⁶⁰ 'Meet Daisy Bindi', *Our Women: National Magazine of UAW*, March-May 1960.

as they had ‘adopted one of the white man’s principles ‘The Labourer is worthy of his hire’.’⁶¹

On their thirtieth anniversary the UAW declared that ‘we have always supported the Aboriginal people in their struggle for land rights and self determination.’⁶² The UAW posited itself as but one of the organisations with predominantly white membership involved in the history of the fight for justice for Aboriginal Australians.⁶³ The UAW’s involvement in Indigenous rights acknowledged the lead of the AAF. The UAW felt a responsibility to do something about the colour bar. In July 1958 the UAW organised a 280 woman deputation to Canberra in to present a 25,000 signature petition for an increase in Child Endowment. In 1959 maternity allowance was extended to Aboriginal women for the first time. The UAW ‘considered this to be one result from their campaign.’⁶⁴ It undertook to ‘familiarise our members and friends with their rights (or lack of them) and conditions and work out what we can do about them.’⁶⁵ In an approach to Indigenous rights its course of action was to contact the AAF for advice, believing ‘best results are achieved when organisations work together and believe also that your organisation would be in a better position to correctly estimate these incidents and determine what should be done.’⁶⁶

⁶¹ ‘Meet Daisy Bindi’, *Our Women: National Magazine of UAW*, March-May 1960.

⁶² Union of Australian Women, *For the Rights of Women*, p.13.

⁶³ Curthoys and MacDonald, *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade*, p.61.

⁶⁴ Curthoys and MacDonald, *More Than a Hat and Glove Brigade*, p.29.

⁶⁵ Barbara Curthoys, Newcastle Branch UAW, to Jack Horner, 13/6/60, AAF, ML MSS 4057/15.

⁶⁶ Barbara Purse, Hon. Secretary of UAW to AAF 8/10/58, AAF, ML MSS 4057/15.

The UAW recognised the need to ‘respect the independence of the Aboriginal struggle.’⁶⁷ Their second approach towards Indigenous rights was to seek the membership of Aboriginal women. This approach emerged from a vision of female unity. The UAW ‘opposed discrimination practiced against Aboriginal women applying for child endowment, and called for Aboriginal women to be treated the same with the same rights as other women.’⁶⁸ The UAW preached the essential need for unity among women for effective activism; ‘women on the land, women in the mining communities, Aboriginal women, women in the city – common problems confront us all, and an understanding of each others live will help us to solve them.’⁶⁹ From its formation, Pearl Gibbs was a member of the UAW, and a member of the management committee. Curthoys asserts that Gibbs became a member because ‘she felt at home with other women in organisation and knew that they were fighters for the Aboriginal cause.’⁷⁰

The UAW negotiated a space for feminist activism in the 1950s by utilising the confines of domesticity to politicise the role of all women. This similarly shaped the parameters of its activism. Despite its communist affiliation and assertion of a ‘militant policy and action orientated programme,’⁷¹ the UAW sought, as Curthoys illustrates, an image of respectability. Mary Wright criticised the UAW for ‘at first trying to be too respectable’, as they questioned whether they should participate in the march on May Day.⁷² However, this alignment of progressive politics with an interest in Aboriginal affairs emerged in a context where assimilation, in Murphy’s words,

⁶⁷ Curthoys and MacDonald, *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade*, p.65.

⁶⁸ Curthoys and MacDonald, *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade*, p.26.

⁶⁹ ‘Women and Children: The Two words go together’, *Our Women: National Magazine of UAW*, August-September 1953.

⁷⁰ Curthoys and MacDonald, *More Than a Hat and Glove Brigade*, p.12.

⁷¹ Union of Australian Women, *For the Rights of Women*, p.4.

⁷² Quoted in Johnson, *Bread and Roses*, p.134.

‘always a nationalist discourse...hoped to find in others a similar sense of belonging to the nation and the state.’⁷³ The UAW however looked for a sense of belonging outside the nation. It believed ‘that if the world is to become a better place for their children to grow up in, they must take a hand in shaping a better world.’⁷⁴ The UAW looked to unity of experience, as evident not only in its involvement of Aboriginal women, but its broad conceptualisation of workers.

Conclusion

In the 1950s the conception of a worker changed and women sought to include housewives in this category, while simultaneously Menzies’ sought to bring women into his mass political base through a conception of citizenship which applauded the qualities exhibited in a domestic setting. Although both Simic and Lake note the 1950s witnessed a demise of older forms of feminism, it must be appreciated that never before had women so broadly been conceptualised as political agents, not only in their involvement in the working class, but in there sense of a ‘housewife’ as well as mother.

Aboriginal women for the first time were considered within the broader category of women, in an outlook which preached unity. Indigenous rights were fundamental in illustrating a progressive nature of the feminist movement, just as Indigenous activists welcomed feminist support for a ‘respectable’ rights campaign. In finding the roots a later feminist movement in the approach to Indigenous rights, the seeds of later problems in addition to later forms of activism are visible. In

⁷³ Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, p.167.

⁷⁴ ‘It took imagination...to buy this house’, *Our Women: National Magazine of the Union of Australian Women*, September-December, 1955, p.9.

seeking involvement of Indigenous women within mainstream feminist politics the distinct identity of Indigenous women was absorbed.

In chapter one I illustrated Indigenous scholars critiqued this very notion subsuming a female Indigenous identity under a framework of gender subordination. This fault can be seen in the UAW in the 1950s. Curthoys, however, admits that by the end of the 1960s it was clear that the aim to incorporate a large number of Indigenous women in the UAW 'was not the solution for most women.'⁷⁵ The UAW was undermined first by the context of the Cold War, and second by the politics of Female Liberation.⁷⁶ It was radical in the 1950s due to its ideological commitments, yet shunned in the 1970s for its strand of respectability. The UAW does however illustrate a radicalisation from feminist politics of the 1950s. Its vision for female emancipation was evident in its platform for Indigenous membership. The UAW held the ideological basis from which the second wave of Australian feminism emerged, but the next wave was to develop a more radical approach to activism.

⁷⁵ Curthoys and MacDonald, *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade*, p.68.

⁷⁶ Simic, 'A Hall of Selected Mirrors', p.259.

Conclusion – Understanding an Ideological Act

‘The furtherance of our great national interests in the twenty-first century suggest, no demand, that gender equality be part of our response to the challenges of the twenty-first century. And none of that will happen without feminism.’

Pru Goward, Sex Discrimination Commissioner,
Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, March 2006.¹

Ann Curthoys describes her student days at the University of Sydney in which she was ‘actively involved in left-wing politics: in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the Labour Club, later in movements opposing racist policies and practices towards Australian Aborigines and Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War.’² The development of such a clear agenda for the political left can be seen in the evolution of feminism from 1930 to 1960 and in the way in which women grappled with their contemporary situation to develop a politics that would shape the nation. The character of organisations that worked for Indigenous rights, and the language with which they sought to raise awareness, is central to exhibiting a feminist negotiation of nationalism. My thesis examines an evolving interest in Indigenous affairs by feminist organisations to indicate the manner in which ‘progressive’ feminism developed from a conservative movement, to sowing the seeds of a second wave of Australian feminism.

The task of writing histories of inter-racial collaboration remains a difficult one. Indigenous critics of feminist practices have not gone unnoticed. Anna Cole, Victoria Haskins and Fiona Paisley sought to evade the problem of

¹ Pru Goward, ‘Do we still need Feminism’, The Brisbant Institute, Customs House, Brisbane, 14 March 2006, www.hereoc.gov.au/speeches/sex_discrim/feminism20060314.htm.

² Ann Curthoys, *For and Against Feminism: A Personal Journey into Feminist Theory and History*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988), p.63.

representation of Indigenous women and appropriation of Aboriginal history by writing only about white women. They assert an awareness ‘of the implicated status of white women in the settler colonialism of the past, and our own implication in the present.’³ Such an awareness is vital, however, sole concentration upon white women’s actions by white female academics threatens to ignore Indigenous perspectives; surely evasion of the subject is just as problematic as issues of false representation?

The uncomfortable fact at the crux of my thesis is that I am involving Indigenous affairs as a platform for explaining feminist development and in this regard the claims and struggles of Aboriginal peoples, and the distinct nature of this agenda of human rights have been largely obscured. This is not my intention. To borrow from Jack Horner, again, in the period of my study ‘the era for self-determination had not yet begun,’⁴ and I therefore believe that actions of white activists remain important. I hope, instead of overshadowing Indigenous voices, to raise the importance of collaborative politics. Jackie and Rita Huggins in 2005 wrote an article in conjunction with white geographer M. Jacobs. They assert that ‘these multiple voices are not intended to reconcile differences to settle things down; they are intended to activate difference, to ensure that dialogue continues.’⁵ In contemporary Australia nothing could be more important than stimulating discussion.

³ Cole, Haskins, Paisley, *Uncommon Ground*, xxix.

⁴ Horner, *Seeking Racial Justice*.

⁵ Jackie Huggins, Rita Huggins and Jane M. Jacobs, ‘Kooramindanjie: Place and the postcolonial’, in Richard White and Penny Russell (eds.), *Memories and Dreams: Reflections on Twentieth Century Australia: Pastiche II*, (NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1997), pp.277-8.

My conclusion brings together the argument of my thesis, but also acknowledges it as a product of contemporary politics, taking lessons from the past in the hope of a strong feminist future. An interest in political concerns is inevitable in a feminist history of collaboration which utilises the theory of postcolonialism. Antoinette Burton illustrates a belief ‘that academics are bound to understand what they do as an ideological act.’⁶ My thesis develops an argument about the evolution a feminist movement that was concerned with the subjects of race and the nation. Susan Sheridan examines Australian women’s writing on race and nationhood and comments that ‘we could aim to become postcolonial feminists in the near future on the faultlines where tensions and collusions between ‘sex’, ‘race’ and ‘nation’ become visible.’⁷ An integral step in this process is the recognition of our own subject position within the postcolonial state. Vron Ware asserts ‘the need to perceive white femininity as a historically constructed concept and the urgency of understanding how feminism had developed as a political movement in a racist society.’⁸ This is indeed necessary, and feminist historians in Australia do seek this acknowledgement, recognising the racially structured lives of white women.⁹ This recognition must continue for the tensions of gender, race and the nation to be amplified in projects of history. It is, ultimately, an ideological act.

From the 1930s feminist groups embraced a politics which saw women responsible for shaping the national character, and set a priority to get women elected to parliament. When women challenged the politics of the masculine

⁶ Burton, ‘Introduction’, p.14.

⁷ Sheridan, *Along the Faultlines*, p.169.

⁸ Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: white women, racism and history*, (London: Verso, 1992), p.3.

⁹ Ruth Frankenberg, *Social Construction of White Women: Whiteness Race Matters*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p.1.

incumbents they asserted that women were rights holders; as mothers, as housewives, as workers, and as citizens. Alison Holland, in examining citizenship, outlines David Dutton's argument that World War I was 'a galvanizing moment in citizenship policy', as the government exhibited that they would infringe upon citizen's rights in a context of 'national emergency'.¹⁰ I, however look at the World War II as the catalyst for change as women were challenged in their relationship to the nation in a time of crisis.

In New South Wales, from the 1930s, the feminist movement is seen to be dominated by Jessie Street which has tended to an acceptance of her tale that she formed the United Associations as all other women's organisations merely had a social function, and from hereon in the feminist movement split.¹¹ Furthermore, her interest in Indigenous Rights from the 1950s is explained as emerging after her feminism had floundered. There is a more complex relationship between feminist organisations in Sydney. I have argued that it was in the manner in which these organisations responded to the government in times of war, that a 'conservative' outlook departed from a progressive agenda. Amos and Parmar presented a foundational history where they asserted 'the power of sisterhood stops at the point at which hard political decisions need to be made and political priorities decided.'¹² I do not challenge this, but seek to assert that a platform of Indigenous rights was consistently on the agenda for feminists, seeking influence as citizens.

¹⁰ Alison Holland, 'The Common Bond? Australian Citizenship', in Martin Lyons and Penny Russell (eds.), *Australia's History: themes and debates*, (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2005), p.158.

¹¹ Mitchell, *Fifty Years of Feminist Achievement*, p.6.

¹² Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar, 'Challenging Imperial Feminisms', *Feminist Review* 17, Autumn 1984, p.5.

I situate my study within a revisionist national history which seeks to overturn the fact ‘the creation of nations has traditionally been seen as men’s business,’¹³ and to recognise the inherently imperialistic nature of our national past.¹⁴ A platform of Indigenous rights necessarily challenges the form of the Australian nation in undermining a notion of cultural homogeneity. The manner in which feminists used Aboriginal affairs to challenge the nation evolved in the period between 1930 and 1960. This is a key indicator of a radicalisation in the feminist movement. In the 1930s feminists aimed to help women get elected to Parliament, without concern to their political affiliation. Feminists sought to widen structures of government to allow women a greater influence and to overturn an assumption of women’s issues as non-political. In the 1940s the UA developed a policy of ‘winning the peace’, and pursued a central role for women in a re-shaping of the nation in times of peace. In the 1950s, with a development of a socialist ideology in the UAW, these women undermined a predominant nationalism through a vision of Soviet internationalism. Indigenous affairs were an indicator of this development of a relationship between nationalism and feminism between 1930 and 1960.

With a focus on nationalism in my thesis it is important to look at the place of the nation in historical analysis. Ann Curthoys asks, ‘is the desire to go beyond the nation only possible when there is little – in terms of historians’

¹³ Grimshaw, Lake, McGrath, Quaterly, *Creating a Nation*, p.1.

¹⁴ Chilla Bulbeck asserts that this grafting of feminism and postcolonialism was enacted in the 1980s, where the rational female subject was superseded by a female identity fractured along lines of race, gender and class; Chilla Bulbeck, ‘Hybrid Feminisms: The Australian Case’ in *The Journal of Women’s History* 6, 3(1994), p119. This is succinctly articulated by Catherine Hall who comments that in the 1980s second generation black Britons were starting to ask questions of ‘what it meant to be black and British.’ For Hall, ‘whiteness was problematised for me in a way that it had never been before.’ Catharine Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp.6-7.

influence on national politics and policy to lose?’¹⁵ I would give an affirmative answer to this question. Recent debates in Australian history illustrate firstly that the very foundation of the nation is not uncontested, and secondly that historians have been viewed as holding much political sway.¹⁶ Curthoys’ question illuminates a role for the historian in influencing national politics. Under this model I conclude with some observations upon the national structure, the scope for historical endeavour, and the influence I as a historian have sought through the writing of this thesis.

The espousal of Indigenous rights and welfare by the feminist movement from the 1930s rested on the knowledge that Australia cared about its international reputation. Association with the Empire was integral to this concern, as exhibited in the politics of the British Commonwealth League, and the talk of ‘human rights’ which gained currency from the United Nations. Rischbieth indeed states in 1962, ‘members of our Guilds hope that initial efforts in the problem of aboriginal welfare may have helped to contribute towards this wider general community awareness of Australia’s responsibility to our native population. This has now become so evidently a part of the requirements of the new World Charter of the United Nations.’¹⁷

The talk of nationalism in Federal politics has not diminished.

Questions of the nation have however been very much subsumed in a dialogue

¹⁵ Ann Curthoys, ‘We’ve just started making national histories, and you want us to stop already?’, in Antoinette Burton (ed.), *After the Imperial Turn*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), p.74.

¹⁶ Anna Haebich, ‘The Battlefields of Aboriginal History’, in Martin Lyons and Penny Russell (eds.), *Australia’s History: Themes and Debates*, (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2005), p1.

¹⁷ Rischbieth, *March of Australian Women*, p.51.

of borders - in defining who does and who does not belong. The contradiction this Federal government grapples with is in forwarding a platform of exclusionary national identity premised on a military and economic embrace of globalisation where we must inevitably open our borders. Howard's attack on Mary Robinson, UN Human Rights Commissioner, stating that we would not be told how to conduct our national affairs by an outside body, marked a significant change which has perhaps not been given sufficient attention.

A theory of postcolonialism is integral to a study of present power dynamics, which must necessarily include gender relations.¹⁸ Furthermore it illustrates the durability of 'the nation' as a category of historical analysis. A discussion of postcolonialism in the Australian context appears somewhat unfitting as the coloniser never went home and reconciliation has not been enacted. An appropriation of Indigenous iconography in the attempt to establish a national iconography is merely a form of intellectual colonialism,¹⁹ and in placing Aborigines in remote, cultural areas has placed them in a distinct past, rather than a contemporary culture.²⁰ Clearly questions of nationalism and national character are not so simple. To give up the framework of the nation state would be to leave unchallenged what is essentially a white masculinised concept, which has not yet adequately dealt with the complexities of our colonial past. Pat O'Shane asserts that people must 'make themselves familiar with the history of Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations within in the framework

¹⁸ Ann McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), pp.6-7.

¹⁹ Jan Kociumbus, 'Performances: indigenisation and postcolonial culture', in Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White (ed.), *Cultural History in Australia*, (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2003), p.133.

²⁰ Heather Goodall, Andrew Jakubowicz, Jeannie Martin, Tony Mitchell, Lois Randall and Kalinga Senevirante, *Racism, Ethnicity and the Media*, Andrew Jakubowicz (ed.), (NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1994), p.60.

of colonialism.²¹ Further to this is the recognition that colonisation is a ‘characteristically unfinished condition.’ Burton asserts that the bypassing the importance of the nation is to acquiesce in the assumption that decolonisation has been complete.²² This must not be allowed.

As I discussed in the introduction, there is a certain praxis inherent in feminist scholarship. Joan Scott asserts that in recognising the potential of women’s experiences ‘women’s history critically confronts the politics of existing histories and inevitably begins the rewriting of history.’²³ Not only is essentially revisionist in nature, but seeks a change in the present. In 2003 Ania Loomba, Survir Kaul, Matti Bunzl, Antoinette Burton, Jed Esty undertook a study of the use of postcolonial theory in history, and sought to uncover whether it remained an important tool for historical analysis. They asserted that the twenty-first century has witnessed a revival of imperialistic politics, with the hegemony of the United States, and that defences of such politics ‘are maintained precisely by ignoring the rich and varied scholarship of decolonisation that had documented the complexity of the imperial past in order not only to make visible its continuing legacies but also to indicate its possible future forms.’²⁴ The aim of postcolonialism is to continue to emphasise, as Antoinette Burton terms it, the porous nature of colonialism, and its continued impact on the present. This is the meaning of her notion of ‘colonial

²¹ O’Shane, *Aboriginal Political Movement*, p.14.

²² Burton, ‘Introduction’, p.1.

²³ Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, p.27.

²⁴ Ania Loomba, Survir Kaul, Matti Bunzl, Antoinette Burton, Jed Esty, ‘Beyond What? An Introduction’, in *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), p.11.

modernity'.²⁵ Having established a future for postcolonial studies, Loomba et al. assert it is important 'that we make explicitly why we write, and to what institutional and ideological purposes.'²⁶

Marilyn Lake is fervent in her assessment of the impact and zeal of feminists in the past, and asserts 'it must be hoped that Australian women will be so passionately moved again.'²⁷ Feminist scholarship in Australia grew out of the politics of female liberation. The journal *Refractory Girl* was established in 1973, and soon after *Hecate* was launched. Ann Curthoys asserts that feminist academic work has been acknowledged to be inextricable from feminist activity.²⁸ I, however, write because I believe that there is an insight to be added from a feminist historian with no such knowledge of a mass movement of women's rights, and an imperative that emerges from a context where 'feminism' is such a dirty word. I reached my teenage years when feminism had in popular rhetoric with an anti-male agenda and little else. The multiplicity of feminism has been overshadowed by a negative stereotype.²⁹ Ann Curthoys writes of her struggle to identify with many aspects of the feminist movement in the late 1970s, but despite disillusionment wrote that 'in the long run being female *does* matter...and I'll keep writing, for all those

²⁵ Antoinette Burton, 'Introduction: the unfinished business of colonial modernities', in Antoinette Burton (ed), *Gender, Sexuality and Colonial Modernities*, (London: Routledge, 1999), p.2.

²⁶ Loomba et. al., 'Beyond What?', p11.

²⁷ Lake, *Getting Equal*, p.282.

²⁸ Curthoys, *For and Against Feminism*, p.87.

²⁹ Jan Pettman illustrates 'it is now common to talk of feminisms, rather than a single Feminism', which has arisen due to a focus of gender relations within discourses of power; Jan Pettman, 'Gendered Knowledges: Aboriginal Women and the Politics of Feminism', in Bain Attwood and John Arnold, *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines*, (Victoria: La Trobe University Press, 1992), p.123.

thirteen years experience are still there, the issues do matter.³⁰ We must not forget the importance of gender identity while equality between the sexes has not been attained.

In 1918 a minimum wage for women was set for the first time, at 54% of a man's wage.³¹ In 1935 the United Associations published a pamphlet which outlined a strategy to achieve equal pay for women. In 1950 the arbitration court ruled the women were to receive 75% of male wages, which was viewed as a stepping stone by feminists, who were dictated by the notions of equality and non-discrimination. In 2004 women still only earned 85% of the male wage.³² Worldwide, men hold nine out of ten cabinet level posts in national governments and nearly as many parliamentary seats.³³ In this context the absence of a strong feminist lobby group is galling.

My thesis tracks the development of a feminist movement in New South Wales in the mid-twentieth century that was aware of the importance of the projected image of the nation, an awareness visible in its campaigns for Indigenous rights. There is certainly something to learn from this movement to seek to make the perception of Australia important again and to re-claim goals of non-discrimination and a premise of equality. When trying to create a name for their newly formed organisation, there was some objection to Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship, because of the popular denigration of the word 'Aboriginal'. Pearl Gibbs however insisted that 'we've got to make them LIKE

³⁰ Curthoys, *For and Against Feminism*, p.67.

³¹ *For Love or money: A History of Women and Work in Australia*, Flashback Films, Sydney, N.S.W., Oceania Media Network, 1983.

³² Australian Government Information Relating to Women, www.women.gov.au.

³³ Pru Goward, 'Do we still need feminism', unpaginated.

it.³⁴ There could be no more apt statement for feminism in the present. There is a proud legacy of feminist achievement which we should embrace and whilst recognising its shortcoming, not merely malign the term. Then women may seek once again to take a fundamental role in shaping the nation on more just terms.

³⁴ Bandler and Fox, *The Time Was Ripe*, p.8.

Bibliography

Primary

Archives

Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship Records 1956-1969, Mitchell Library, MSS 4057.

Australian Women's Charter Records, National Library of Australia, MS 2302.

Feminist Club of N.S.W Records, 1928-1973, Mitchell Library, MSS 1703.

Flashback Films, Records Relating to *For Love or Money*, Mitchell Library, MSS 7253

Joan Kingsley-Strack Papers, National Library of Australia, MS 9661.

Pearl Gibbs Papers, 1937-1983, Mitchell Library, MSS 6922

United Associations of Women Records ca. 1930-1970, Mitchell Library, MSS 2160.

Histories and Autobiographies

Bandler, Faith and Len Fox (eds.), *The Time was Ripe: A history of the Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship*, (NSW: Alternative Publishing Co-operative Ltd., 1983).

Bandler, Faith, *Turning the Tide: A Personal History of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders*, (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1989).

Curthoys, Barbara and Audrey McDonald, *More Than a Hat and Glove Brigade*, (Sydney: Union of Australian Women, 1996).

Horner, Jack, *Seeking Racial Justice: An insider's memoir of the movement for Aboriginal Advancement*, (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2004).

Rischbieth, Bessie, *March of Australian Women: A Record of Fifty Years' Struggle for Equal Citizenship*, (Perth: Paternson Brokensha, 1964).

Street, Jessie M., *Truth or Repose*, (Sydney: Australasian Book Society, 1966).

The Feminist Club of New South Wales, *The Feminist Club of N.S.W. – Silver Jubilee Souvenir 1914-1939*, (Sydney: B.H. Macdougall, 1939).

Union of Australian Women, *For the Rights of Women. Three Decades of Struggle, 1950-1980: 30th Anniversary*, *Union of Australian Women*, (Sydney: Union of Australian Women, 1980).

Fiction

Prichard, Katharine Susannah, *Coonardo: The well in the shadow*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1930).

Newspapers/periodicals

Australian Women's Digest, United Associations of Women, 1944-1948.

Our Women: National Magazine of the Union of Australian Women, 1953-1960.

Sydney Morning Herald, 1932-1949.

The Aborigines' Protector: Official Organ of the Association of the Protection of Native Races, 1936-1939.

Books and Documents

Australian Woman's Charter, *Second Charter Conference Resolutions*, (August 4-11, 1946, Sydney), National Library of Australia, NLp396AUS.

Australian Woman's Charter New South Wales Committee, 'Representations made by the Deputation from the Australian Women's Charter Committee to the Prime Minister of June 8th 1949, (Sydney, 1949), National Library of Australia, NLp396.

Attwood, Bain and Andrew Markus, *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights: A Documentary History*, (NSW.: Allen & Unwin, 1999).

Bennett, Mary M., *The Australian Aboriginal as a Human Being*, (London: Alston Rivers Ltd., 1930).

Bennett, Mary M., *Human Rights for Australian Aborigines: How can they learn without a teacher?*, (Brisbane: "Truth" and "Sportsman" Ltd., 1957).

Bromham, Ada, *The First Australians and the new Australians*, (Perth: Port Printing Works, 1957).

Elkin, A.P. *Citizenship for Aborigines: A National Aboriginal Policy*, (Sydney; Australasian Publishing Company Co. Pty. Ltd., 1944).

Lake, Marilyn, and Katie Holmes (ed.), *Freedom Bound II*, (NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1995).

Radi, Heather (ed.), *Jessie Street: Documents and Essays*, (NSW: Women's Redress Press Inc., 1990).

Street, Jessie, *Report on aborigines in Australia*, (Sydney: Author: 1957).

Union of Australian Women, *Handbook for Members*, (Sydney: Union of Australian Women, 197?).

United Associations of Women, *1960 Annual Report*, (Sydney, NSW: United Associations of Women, 1960), National Library of Australia, NQ396.06 UNI.

Wright, T., *New Deal for the Aborigines*, (Sydney: Current Book Distributors, 1944).

Interviews

Ruby Rich, recorded by Hazel de Berg, 4 June 1975, National Library of Australia, ORAL DeB 835-839.

Ruby Rich, recorded by Hazel de Berg, 4 August 1976, National Library of Australia, ORAL DeB 954-955.

Parliamentary Papers

1937 New South Wales Select Committee Enquiry into the Administration of the Aboriginal Protection Board, Joint Volumes Parliamentary Papers, 1938/39/40, pp.597-738, Mitchell Library, MD Q 328.9106/5.

Secondary

Articles

Alomes, Stephen, Mark Dober and Donna Hellier, 'The Social Context of Postwar Conservatism', in Ann Curthoys and John Merritt (eds.), *Australia's First Cold War: 1945-1953*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1984).

Amos, Valerie and Pratibha Parmar, 'Challenging Imperial Feminisms', *Feminist Review* 17, Autumn 1984, pp.3-19.

Banister, Sally, 'Our Aboriginal Sisters', *Woman Today*, May 1984, pp.8-9.

Beaton, Lynn, 'The importance of women's paid labour: Women at work in World War II', in Margaret Bevege, Margaret James and Carmel Shute, *Worth Her Salt: Women at work in Australia*, (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1982), pp.84-98.

Bulbeck, Chilla, 'Hybrid Feminisms: The Australian Case' in the *Journal of Women's History* 6, 3(1994), pp.112-121.

Burton, Antoinette, 'Introduction: the unfinished business of colonial modernities', in Antoinette Burton (ed), *Gender, Sexuality and Colonial Modernities*, (London: Routledge, 1999), pp.1-17.

Burton, Antoinette, 'Introduction: On the Inadequacy and the indispensability of the nation' in Antoinette Burton (ed.), *After the Imperial Turn*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), pp.1-23.

Castle, Josie, 'The Australian Women's Guild of Empire', in Elizabeth Windschuttle (ed.), *Women, Class and History: Feminist Perspectives on Australia, 1788-1978*, (Melbourne: Dominion Press, 1980), pp. 287-307.

Curthoys, Ann, 'We've just started making national histories, and you want us to stop already?', in Antoinette Burton (ed.), *After the Imperial Turn*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), pp.70-89.

Damousi, Joy, 'Marching to Different Drums – Women's Mobilisations, 1914-1939', in Kay Sanders and Raymond Evans (eds.), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, (Marickville, NSW: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), pp.350-375.

Damousi, Joy, and Lake, Marilyn, 'Introduction: Warfare, History and Gender', in Joy Damosi and Marilyn Lake (eds.), *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp.1-20.

Damousi, Joy, 'Making the Ordinary Extraordinary in the 1950s: Explorations of Interiority and Australian Cultural History', in Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White, *Cultural History in Australia*, (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2003), pp.214-225.

Evans, Raymond and Saunders, Kay, 'No Place Like Home: The evolution of the Australian Housewife', in Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (eds.), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, (Marickville, NSW: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), pp.175-196.

Ferres, Kay, 'Introduction: In the shadow of the nineties: Women and Writing in Australia, 1890-1930', in Kay Ferres (ed.), *The Time to Write: Australian Women Writers, 1890-1930*, (Victoria: Penguin, 1993), pp.1-18.

Goodall, Heather and Huggins, Jackie, 'Aboriginal women are everywhere in contemporary struggles' in Kay Sanders and Raymond Evans (eds.), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, (Marickville, NSW: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), pp.398-425.

Goodall, Heather, 'New South Wales', in Ann McGrath (ed.), *Contested Ground: Australian Aborigines Under the British Crown*, (N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 1995), pp.55-120.

Goodall, Heather, 'Aboriginal history and the politics of information control', in Richard White and Penny Russell (eds.), *Memories and Dreams: Reflections on Twentieth Century Australia, Pastiche II*, (NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1997), pp.77-96.

Griffith, Gail, 'The Feminist Club of NSW, 1914-1970: A History of Feminist Politics in Decline', *Hecate*, vol.14., no.1, 1998, pp.55-67.

Haebich, Anna, 'The Battlefields of Aboriginal History', in Martin Lyons and Penny Russell (eds.), *Australia's History: Themes and Debates*, (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2005), pp.1-21.

Haskins, Victoria, 'Lovable Natives' and 'Tribal Sisters': Feminism, Maternalism, and the Campaign for Aboriginal Citizenship in New South Wales in the Late 1930s', *Hecate*, 1998, pp.8-21.

Haskins, Victoria, 'Could you see to the return of my daughter: Fathers and daughters under the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board Child removal policy', *Australian Historical Studies* 34, 121(2003), pp.106-121.

Hirst, John, 'Women and History', *Quadrant*, no.315, vol. Xxxix, 3(March 1995), pp.35-43.

Holland, Alison, 'Feminism, Colonialism and Aboriginal Workers: An Anti-Slavery Crusade', in *Aboriginal Workers*, special issues of *Labour History* 69, November 1995, pp.52-64.

Holland, Alison, 'Wives and Mothers Like Ourselves? Exploring White Women's Intervention in the Politics of Race, 1920s-1940s', *Australian Historical Studies* 117(2001), pp.292-310.

Holland, Alison, 'The Common Bond? Australian Citizenship', in Martin Lyons and Penny Russell (eds.), *Australia's History: themes and debates*, (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2005), pp.152-171.

Huggins, Jackie, '“Firing On in the Mind”: Aboriginal Women Domestic Servants in the Inter-War Years', *Hecate* 13, 2(1987/8), pp.5-23.

Huggins, Jackie, 'A Contemporary view of Aboriginal Women's Relationship to the White Women's Movement' in Norma Grieve and Alisa Burns (eds.), *Australian Women: Contemporary Feminist Thought*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp.70-80.

Huggins, Jackie, Huggins, Rita and Jacobs, Jane M., 'Kooramindanjie: Place and the postcolonial', in Richard White and Penny Russell (eds.), *Memories and Dreams: Reflections on Twentieth Century Australia: Pastiche II*, (NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1997), pp.229-245.

Johnson, Lesley, 'Narratives of Feminism: The 1950s reconsidered', in Patricia Grimshaw, Ruth Fincer and Marion Campbell (eds.), *Studies in Gender: Essays in Honour of Norma Grieve*, (Victoria: Committee for Gender Studies, University of Melbourne, 1992), pp.96-104.

Kociumbus, Jan, 'Performances: indigenisation and postcolonial culture', in Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White (ed.), *Cultural History in Australia*, (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2003), pp.127-141.

Lake, Marilyn, 'The Politics of Respectability: Identifying the Masculinist Context', *Historical Studies* 22, 86(April 1986), pp.116-131.

Lake, Marilyn, 'Female Desires: The Meanings of World War II', in Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake (eds.), *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp.60-80.

Lake, Marilyn, 'Feminist History as 'National History'', *Australian Historical Studies* 106(1996), pp.154-169.

Lake, Marilyn, 'Feminism and the Gendered Politics of Antiracism, Australia 1927-1957: From Maternal Protectionism to Leftist Assimilationism', *Australian Historical Studies* 110, 1998, pp.91-108.

Lake, Marilyn, 'Marriage as Bondage: The Anomaly of the Citizen Wife', *Australian Historical Studies* 112, 1999, pp.116-129.

Loomba, Ania, Survir Kaul, Matti Bunzl, Antoinetter Burton, Jed Esty, 'Byond What? An Introduction', in *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), pp.1-38.

McGrath, Ann, ' "Beneath the Skin": Australian Citizenship, Rights and Aboriginal Women', in Renate Howe (ed.), *Women and the State in Australian Perspectives*, (special edition of *Journal of Australia Studies*), (Bundoora: La Trobe University Press, 1993), pp.99-114.

McGregor, Russell, 'From Old Testament to New: A.P. Elkin on Christian Conversion and Cultural Assimilation', *The Journal of Religious History* 25, 1(February 2001), pp.39-55.

Miller, Lydia, 'The Women's Movement and Aboriginal Women', in *Refracting Voices: Feminist Perspectives from Refractory Girl*, (NSW: Refractory Girl Feminist Journal, 1993), pp.66-68.

Oppenheimer, Melanie and Scates, Bruce, 'Australians and War', in Martin Lyons and Penny Russell (eds.), *Australia's History: Themes and Debates*, (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2005), pp.134-152.

O'Shane, Pat, 'Aboriginal Women and the Women's Movement', in *Refracting Voices: Feminist Perspectives from Refractory Girl*, (N.S.W.: Refractory Girl Feminist Journal, 1993), pp.69-75.

Paisely, Fiona, 'Federalising the Aborigines? Constitutional Reform in the Late 1920s', *Australian Historical Studies* 110, 1998, pp.248-266.

Paisely, Fiona, ' "Unnecessary crimes and tragedies": race, gender and sexuality in Australian policies of Aboriginal child removal', in Antoinette Burton (ed.), *Gender, Sexuality and Colonial Modernities*, (London: Routledge, 1999), pp.134-147.

Paisley, Fiona, 'White Women in the Field: Feminism, Cultural Relativism and Aboriginal Rights, 1920-1937', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no.52, 1997,' pp.113-125.

- Paisley, Fiona, 'For a brighter day': Constance Ternent Cooke', in Anna Cole, Victoria Cole and Fiona Paisley (eds.), *Uncommon Ground: White Women in Aboriginal History*, (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2005), pp.172-198.
- Pattel-Gray, Anne, 'The Hard Truth: White Secrets, Black Realities', *Australian Feminist Studies* 30, 14(1999), pp.259-266.
- Pettman, Jan, 'Gendered Knowledges: Aboriginal Women and the Politics of Feminism', in Bain Attwood and John Arnold, *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines*, (Victoria: La Trobe University Press, 1992), pp.120-132.
- Rand, Patricia, 'Feminism and Class: The United Associations of Women and the Council of Action for Equal Pay in the Depression', in Margaret Bevege, Margaret James and Carmel Shute, *Worth Her Salt: Women at work in Australia*, (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1982), pp.270-285.
- Read, Peter, 'Aboriginal Rights', in Heather Radi (ed.), *Jessie Street: Documents and Essays*, (NSW: Women's Redress Press Inc., 1990), pp.259-266.
- Reekie, Gail, 'War, Sexuality and Feminism: Perth Women's Organisations, 1938-1945', in *Historical Studies* 21(5), October 1985, pp.576-591.
- Reekie, Gail, 'Feminist History After Foucault', in Clare O'Farrell (ed.), *Foucault: The Legacy*, (Queensland: Queensland University of Technology, 1997), pp.298-308.
- Roe, Jill, 'What has Nationalism Offered Australian Women?' in Norma Grieve and Alisa Burns (eds.), *Australian Women: Contemporary Feminist Thought*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp.29-39.
- Rowse, Tim, 'Heaven and a Hills hoist: Australian critics on suburbia', in Richard White and Penny Russell (eds.), *Memories and Dreams: Reflections on Twentieth Century Australia: Pastiche II*, (NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1997), pp.213-218.
- Russell, Penny, 'Cultures of Distinction', in Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White (eds.), *Cultural History in Australia*, (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2003), pp.158-171.
- Saunders, Kay, and Geoffrey Bolton, 'Girdled for War: Women's mobilisations in World War Two', in Kay Sanders and Raymond Evans (eds.), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, (Marickville, NSW: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), pp.376-398.
- Walden, Inara, 'That was Slavery Days': Aboriginal Domestic Servants in New South Wales in the Twentieth Century', in *Aboriginal Workers*, special issues of *Labour History* 69, November 1995, pp.196-209.
- White, Kate, 'Bessie Rischbieth, Jessie Street and the end of first-wave feminism in Australia', in Margaret Bevege, Margaret James and Carmel Shute, *Worth Her Salt: Women at work in Australia*, (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1982), pp.319-329.

Windschuttle, Elizabeth, 'Introduction' in Elizabeth Windschuttle (ed.), *Women, Class and History: Feminist Perspectives on Australia, 1788-1978*, (Melbourne: Dominion Press, 1980), pp.19-33.

Woollacott, Angela, 'The Fragmentary Subject: Feminist History, Official Records, and Self-Representation', *Women's Studies International Forum* 21, 4(1998), pp.329-339.

Books

Adam-Smith, Patsy, *Australian Women at War*, (Victoria: Thomas Nelson Australia, 1994).

Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1983).

Beasley, Jack, *A Gallop of Fire: Katharine Susannah Prichard: On Guard for Humanity* (NSW: Wedgetail Press, 1993).

Brett, Judith, *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People*, (N.S.W.: Macmillan Australia, 1992).

Brett, Judith, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class: From Alfred Deakin to John Howard*, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Broome, Richard, *Aboriginal Australians: Black Response to White Dominance 1788-1980*, (NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1982).

Cole, Anna, Victoria Haskins and Fiona Paisley, *Uncommon Ground: White women in Aboriginal History*, (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2005).

Connell, R.W., and Irving, T.H., *Class Structure in Australian History*, 2nd ed., (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire Pty Liminite, 1992).

Curthoys, Ann, *For and Against Feminism: A Personal Journey into Feminist Theory and History*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988).

Damousi, Joy, *Women Come Rally! Socialism, Communism and Gender in Australia*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Frankenberg, Ruth, *Social Construction of white women: Whiteness race matters*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

Friedan, Betty, *The Feminine Mystique*, (Victoria: Penguin Books, 1965).

Flick, Isabel, and Heather Goodall, *Isabel Flick: The many lives of an extraordinary Aboriginal woman*, (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2004).

Gilbert, Kevin, *Because a White Man will never do it*, (Brisbane: Angus & Robertson, 1973).

Goodall, Heather, Jakubowicz, Andrew, Martin, Jeannie, Mitchell, Tony, Randall, Lois and Senevirante, Kalinga, *Racism, Ethnicity and the Media*, Andrew Jakubowicz (ed.), (NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1994).

Goodall, Heather, *Invasion to Embassy*, (NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1996).

Grimshaw, Patricia, Lake, Marilyn, McGrath, Ann, and Quartly, Marian (eds.), *Creating a Nation*, (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1994).

Hall, Catharine, *Civilising Subjects*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

Haskins, Victoria, *One Bright Spot*, (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

Horner, Jack, *Vote Ferguson for Aboriginal Freedom*, (Sydney: Australia and New Zealand Book Company, 1974).

Johnson, Audrey, *Bread and Roses: A personal history of three militant women and their friends 1902-1988*, (NSW: Left Book Club, 1990).

Johnson, Lesley, *The Modern Girl: Girlhood and Growing Up*, (NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1993).

Lake, Marilyn, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism*, (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1999).

Lake, Marilyn, *Faith: Faith Bandler, Gentle Activist*, (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2002).

Macintyre, Stuart, *A Concise History of Australia*, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

MacKenzie, Norman, *Women in Australia*, (Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney: F.W. Cheshire, 1962).

Magery, Susan, *Passions of the First-Wave Feminists*, (Sydney; UNSW Press, 2001).

Marcus, Julie, *First in their Field: Women and Australian Anthropology*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1993).

Markus, Andrew, *Australian Race Relations, 1788-1993*, (NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1994).

McClintock, Ann, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1995).

McGrath, Ann (ed.), *Contested Ground: Australian Aborigines under the British Crown*, (NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1995).

McKernan, Michael, *All In! Fighting the War at Home*, (N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 1983).

Mitchell, Winifred, *Fifty Years of Feminist Achievement: A History of the United Associations of Women*, (Sydney: United Association of Women, 1979).

Moreton-Robinson, Aliene, *Talkin' up to the white woman: Aboriginal Women and Feminism*, (University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 2000).

Murphy, John, *Imagining the Fifties*, (NSW: Pluto Press, 2000).

Paisley, Fiona, *Loving Protection? Australian Feminism and Aboriginal Women's Rights, 1919-1939*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000).

Pownall, Eve, *Australian Pioneer Women*, 3rd ed., (NSW: Viking O'Neil, 1988).

Prichard, Katharine Susannah, *Straight Left: Articles and Addresses on Politics, Literature and Women's Affairs over almost 60 years from 1910-1968*, collected and introduced by Ric Throssell, (Sydney: Wild & Woolley, 1982).

Scott, Joan Wallach, *Gender and the Politics of History*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

Sekules, Peter, *Jessie Street: A Rewarding but Unrewarded Life*, (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1978).

Sheridan, Susan, *Along the Faultlines: Race and Nation in Australian Women's writing, 1880s-1930s*, (NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1995).

Ware, Vron, *Beyond the Pale: white women, racism and history*, (London: Verso, 1992).

Wilde, W.H., *Three Radicals*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1969).

Theses

Foley, Meredith, 'The Women's Movement in New South Wales and Victoria, 1918-1938', thesis, University of Sydney, 1985.

Simic, Zora, 'A Hall of Selected Mirrors: Feminism, History and Identity, 1919-1969', unpublished P.h.D. thesis, University of Sydney, 2003.

Speeches

Goward, Pru, 'Do we still need Feminism', The Brisbane Institute, Customs House, Brisbane, 14 March 2006,
www.hereoc.gov.au/speeches/sex_discrim/feminism20060314.htm.

O'Shane, Pat, *Aboriginal Political Movements: Some Observations*, Frank Archibald Memorial Lecture, The 1998 Lecture Series, (University of New England, 1998).

Film

For Love or money: A History of Women and Work in Australia, Flashback Films, Sydney, N.S.W., Oceania Media Network, 1983.

Websites

Australian Government Information Relating to Women, <http://www.women.gov.au>.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics, <http://www.abs.gov.au>.