To look closely at the stories of a group of women who became teachers in State Primary Schools in North Queensland in the period after 1920 is to see, initially, a picture of intelligent girls who chose teaching for a variety of reasons including lack of other vocational opportunity. Their stories paint a picture of dedication and hard work, often under difficult conditions: inadequate teaching facilities, large classes, the threat of arbitrary transfers, sub-standard accommodation and lack of equity with men in pay, tenure, allowances, superannuation and promotion. Each is a portion of a much larger picture: the story of female teachers in Queensland in general. Their story unfolds against the background of the slow evolution of better conditions for women teachers. Change in female teachers' conditions was made harder because of the social attitude that a woman was not equal to a man. Acceptance of this attitude by both men and women was a key factor that held women back in the pursuit of equity. Other barriers were provided by the Government, the Department, the Industrial Commission and even the Union. The Government opposed improving women's conditions of employment partly because lower pay scales for women saved money. As well, those in positions of power were men who benefited most from maintenance of the status quo. This status quo changed as social attitudes towards women changed and as women themselves pushed for equality. At first they argued their case within the Queensland Teachers' Union. Having won that battle, they used the Union to articulate the case that women were equal to men and should be treated accordingly.

Female teachers were of high intellectual calibre and as good as most of their male counterparts, if not better. The evidence to support this contention comes from statistics and from the observations of inspectors, principals and teachers themselves. One reason could be that the women who became teachers were more academically able. Clarke suggests that

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1 Of Education, which until 1957 was known as the Department of Public Instruction.
because young women did not have the career opportunities available to men, bright girls were more likely to become teachers; though males did not always take up all the training college places reserved for men, there were fewer places for women and strong competition.\(^2\) This statistical evidence is supported by anecdotal evidence. As one ex-teacher remarked:

> I was lucky ever to be a teacher because that was the year [1931] they only took ten [female] students from Queensland...there was a reduction in numbers and they took ten girls and fifteen boys from Junior.\(^3\)

Her friend from college days who was the only student from Rockhampton High School to gain a teacher's scholarship, commented that she had kept contact with "...the top girl from the previous year who had also gone to college...."\(^4\)

This lady also explained that there were not then many opportunities for girls to enter professions; she could not remember having seen any other professional woman besides a school teacher except a nurse. "I had it in mind that I would be a teacher but my main motivation was to get away from the farm". She also remembers doing a special examination held for those who wished to join the public service and that the results came back as:

Number of females wanted in the public service for the whole of Queensland: 2; Your position: 10.\(^5\)

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2 E. Clarke, *Female Teachers in Queensland State Schools*, Brisbane 1985, p.27. In 1924 scholarships were reserved for 10 males and 5 females after the Senior examination and for 25 males and 15 females after Junior.

3 E. Kinzbrunner, Interview, Atherton, 9 September 1992. In 1930 there were 328 students with Departmental scholarships at teachers colleges. In 1931 this number was reduced to 243.


5 *Ibid.* This lady, later widowed, followed the profession all her working life. She studied externally for a degree and moved into high school teaching. Later she studied further and worked at the University of Queensland.
Another ex-teacher, who went to college in 1929, was equally candid when asked if she had wanted to be a teacher: "No. It was a job and jobs were scarce".  

The scarcity of employment opportunities for girls in the country was recalled by a teacher who went to college in 1942. Her mother, who had had very little educational opportunity, encouraged her to sit for the scholarship examination so that she could continue to high school:

I went home and said "He [the headmaster] wants me to have a go at scholarship". Mum said "Well why don't you Dot? If you do, you can go to the pictures every Saturday night and I'll give you twenty-five pounds at the end of the year for having a go and fifty pounds if you pass". I said "I'll have a go at scholarship". Well anyone would have a go, wouldn't they? If I hadn't gone I'd have ended up in the bar of the hotel. There weren't other opportunities in those days. You could go nursing if you weren't good enough for anything else, if you couldn't pass...that's the funny part...girls who couldn't pass and get on to anything else went nursing. Now you can't go nursing unless you've got a good senior.  

Another teacher, who went to college in 1953, illustrates both the academic ability of girls who went into teaching and the difference in vocational opportunity that existed for girls and boys:

I wanted to become a doctor and I did very well at school [Cairns High] and I was awarded an open scholarship, a Commonwealth Scholarship, but that only paid for fees and books at the University...but my parents had a lot of misfortune...that took all their savings. Medicine was out so I decided to be a teacher because you could be bonded after junior and I received thirty shillings a fortnight during sub-senior and senior...that was a marvellous help. Even in 1950 it still wasn't common for women to go into some of those professions like engineering and medicine, even pharmacy. The openings were there for bright boys to go into those professions. I could

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6  I. Moynihan, Interview, Atherton, 9 September 1992. Miss Moynihan may have gone into teaching because it was a job but she did it so well that she is still respected by the people of Atherton for her contribution to primary school education.

have been sponsored if I had been a boy. There used to be a doctor here called Doctor...he would have sponsored me if I had been a boy.  

Though some became teachers because it was the only opportunity they could see, most of the women interviewed gave reasons for becoming teachers that can be summed up as "I always wanted to be a teacher...." However no matter how different their motivations, all had worked hard at school as they realised good results were essential in the quest for an opportunity to train as a teacher.

They also worked hard at training college. A sample of nine years between 1922 and 1939 is shown in Table 1. This table shows that in the Class III Examinations for Training College Scholarship Holders, only once were there fewer than five women in the top ten places, and in eight of thirteen examinations women were in nine or ten of the top ten places.

The real test was competency in the classroom; here again their performance measured by Inspectors compared favourably with the men. As early as 1916 one inspector praised the work done by women who took the place of men during World War I:

The female teacher has proved a success in boys' schools. She is naturally more patient and painstaking, and has usually fine intuition...We know that the female class teacher in a mixed school is the equal, if not the superior, of the male class teacher. She is as sound in her instruction, and as a rule creates a better tone.

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10 Clarks, Female Teachers in Queensland State Schools, p.29.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number Who Sat</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Sex of Occupant of First Place</th>
<th>No. of Females in the First 10 Places</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Class III Examination for Teachers Training College Scholarship Holders 1922-1939
In 1926 another wrote in his annual report:
In this district quite a few senior female teachers are employed as assistants. Almost invariably, I found them most efficient...A number of these teachers I consider amongst the finest I have inspected, and the school is indeed fortunate that has a leavening of them; their loyalty to their school and the Department, the interest they have in their work, and their never tiring energy and zeal standing out as an excellent example for the young members of the profession to follow.\textsuperscript{11}

Perhaps it could be argued that these latter comments were about older, experienced teachers and not indicative of the performance of young female teachers. In talking to ex-teachers and listening to them describe their early teaching days their dedication shines through. One teacher, who in 1924 was sent to Midgenoo, a one teacher school "about four miles north of Tully" was then in her second year of teaching. She stayed for ten years and ended up with forty pupils in all the grades. She described how she would stay back at school in the afternoon till almost dark, preparing for the day ahead. This involved planning the lessons and writing work on the different blackboards for different grades. She explained how she organised the teaching of the children with this example:
...the little ones learnt to write properly too. They would sit there practising their strokes while I taught one of the higher grades analysis or parsing...also they learnt their tables. I would do a chart and if one of the older pupils were very good [at the topic I was teaching their class] they would go out on the verandah and help the little ones.\textsuperscript{12}

Her older sister, who trained as a pupil teacher at Mt Garnet, was sent as the teacher to a one teacher school called Merragallan near Malanda in 1920. She still has five of her inspection reports from the six years she spent there; summarised in Table 2, they would be a credit to any teacher.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p.26.
\textsuperscript{12} D. Berkley, Interview, Proserpine, 22 September 1992.
Table 2: Inspection Results for Miss A. Johns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1920</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1922</th>
<th>1923</th>
<th>1924</th>
<th>1926</th>
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<td>good</td>
<td>very good</td>
<td>good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary power</td>
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<td>very good</td>
<td>good</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching ability</td>
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<td>very good</td>
<td>good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>very good</td>
<td>very good</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>very good</td>
<td>good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The confidence that headteachers had in their female staff is illustrated by two anecdotes. One lady whose family lived on a farm outside Emerald during the Depression, spent three years doing correspondence lessons under the supervision of an older sister who had herself only had correspondence lessons. She recalls that she spent most of her time "out riding the horses, having a wonderful time, bringing in the cows...."

Consequently when the family bought a hotel and moved to a town with a school she described what happened:

I went into grade two and I came dead, stone, motherless last. He [the headmaster] said "I'm going to put you nohopers with Miss Birch" and he gave her this class of nohopers...she was the loveliest lady. She got stuck into us and at the end of the year I topped the whole of grade two.\(^\text{13}\)

Another teacher mentioned that in her sixth year of teaching, after a "glowing report" from the inspector, she was selected by the head teacher to teach the scholarship class. She described what happened:

Well the town was in an uproar. Never before had a woman taught scholarship in Pittsworth. Mr Fletcher, the Minister for Education, lived at Irongate [near Pittsworth] so they sent a delegation to him. Ray Town [the headmaster] said "She's the best". So I taught scholarship and the whole fifty-three got through. I was a made woman...the logs for my firewood would be cut and stacked up. I'd find tins [of biscuits and cakes] on my front steps. If I ran out of water or the tank was getting low, you'd go home and the tank would be full. The three years I was there teaching scholarship only one girl got forty-eight percent...all the rest passed.\(^\text{14}\)

In describing her teaching experience at Pittsworth this lady is conveying information about more than her competency as a teacher: she is also revealing information about class sizes and accommodation, two of the common threads which run through all the stories. These two issues, along

\(^{13}\) D. Stagg, Interview. The head teacher then persuaded her to skip grade 3 and go straight into grade 4.

\(^{14}\) N. Bowers, Interview. The scholarship examination was then (in the 1950s) held at the end of Grade Eight and unless a pupil passed they could not proceed to high school. A list of successful students would appear in country newspapers and the teacher was judged by the number of students who passed.
with the frequently arbitrary nature of transfers, emerged as matters for concern.

All the women, except for those who taught in small one teacher schools, spoke about the large size of their classes in a very matter of fact manner. In their experience, all teachers, male or female, routinely taught forty or fifty pupils. One teacher described the class sizes in the context of the preparation and correction load:

...going home with all this work...in the days when we would mark compositions on one night...maps on another...especially when we had sixty or seventy...do your full preparation...¹⁵

The same teacher remarked that once:

I had seventy kids in two classes [grades 3 and 4]...but I had never had under fifty in a class.¹⁶

Another teacher described one year of teaching in the late 1950s:

...the class numbers were big. Berenice had grade 5 and I had grade 4 and we were in that one big room [at the old Proserpine State School]. I had fifty-five and Berenice had sixty-four in that one big room...you can just imagine...if you wanted to do reading or learn tables you'd go down under the school. So if Berenice was going down [the steps] I was coming up the other steps...unless we were doing some quiet work...but in those days you did much more of the simultaneous type of thing.¹⁷

None experienced the practice whereby large numbers of pupils were crammed into the lower grades to reduce numbers in the higher classes.¹⁸

They did note however that as female teachers they tended to be allocated the lower grades while men were given the upper grades. In a two teacher school this is understandable as the head teacher, who was more experienced, had to prepare pupils for the scholarship examination. In the

¹⁵ N. Bowers, Interview.
¹⁶ Ibid.
¹⁷ D. Stagg, Interview. It is hard to imagine how else they could have taught so many children with the limited facilities available and no library or photocopier.
¹⁸ Clarke, Female Teachers in Queensland State Schools, p.29. Clarke describes the situation at Emerald in 1922 where "the male head taught 19 pupils in one class while a female assistant (Classification level III 5) taught 69 children in three classes".
larger schools the practice appears to have arisen partly from convention and partly from preference. The convention had arisen because the prevailing wisdom was that male teachers were better teachers for older girls as well as for older boys. The preference was explained by one teacher who had taught all classes and liked to teach grade 4. This lady remarked that most of the men preferred not to teach the younger grades. Many of the women referred to female teachers they knew who specialised in the infant grades.

Whichever class was taught, the teachers, especially in the 1940s and 1950s, struggled to teach in overcrowded, under-equipped schools. One described teaching in rooms made by closing in under the school: "...when it rained the water used to go under there...."^2

If teaching accommodation was inadequate, then so was the living accommodation experienced by many teachers, especially single female teachers. One teacher vividly remembers her arrival at Gladstone:

It was only a very tiny little place. I was met by the secretary of the school committee who said "It's very difficult to get board but we have found a lady who can take you at her boarding house" so I got a taxi to the boarding house and the lady was lovely. She took me upstairs and she said "I've never had a teacher as a boarder before. I'm so thrilled, I've told all the neighbours". She took me to show me where I would be sleeping downstairs where she had completely closed in under the house and it was like a large dormitory. She said "Because you are so special I got the carpenter in". There was a curtain around the bed just like in a hospital. I started settling in when the other boarders arrived home. They were all men, meatworkers from the local Swifts works. I said "I can't stay here". She said "But dear, I've put a curtain around!" I packed up and left and stayed at the hotel for a couple of days though I couldn't have afforded to stay there for long. The school committee man, who was very apologetic, helped me find board with the milkman. They were a lovely family. The only problem was everyone

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19 *Ibid.* Clarke quotes from one male head teacher of a large Brisbane school who "claimed that older girls profited from a broad, just and tolerant outlook which a man's wider interests could give".

20 D. Staff, Interview.

had to go to bed at six o'clock at night because you had to get up for breakfast at two o'clock in the morning because he had to do his milk run.22 This experience would appear to have been the exception. This lady explained her difficulties in finding suitable accommodation as a result of it being "a tiny little town" and "I was the only import, everyone else had homes there".23 Other teachers were luckier.

I had private board...the lady also had a few cane-cutters in the season. I had to share the room with the two daughters...there wasn't anything very traumatic about that...it was good family food...they had a piano and a million mosquitoes would eat you in summer...it would rain for weeks and we couldn't get anywhere out of Aloomba...but it was fun.24 Others were able to find accommodation at hotels or were lucky enough to be sent to their home town or to a town where they had relations. Even where accommodation was not the best most teachers did not doubt the good intentions of the provider. One ex-teacher described her board in Miriam Vale:

There was a policeman's widow who kept refreshment rooms next to the railway line. She was a very kind old lady but she didn't give me enough bedclothes. I was always cold.25

The Union was aware of the difficult living conditions faced by teachers in remote areas. In 1920 the Union learnt of a woman teacher obliged to share a room with four other women and of another who had to share a bed with two girls. The General Secretary reacted to criticism by country teachers by embarking on an annual trip to the branches to investigate conditions himself. In 1923 he condemned both the school buildings and the standard of accommodation he found.26 The Union continued its campaign and complained to the Department of primitive facilities. Even in 1939 a

22 N. Bowers, Interview. The School Committees were the forerunners of Parents and Citizens' Associations.
23 Ibid. The year was 1956.
24 E. Kinzbunner, Interview. The year was 1933.
25 U. Hughes, Interview. This was also 1933.
delegate to Annual Conference reported that he had found a young female teacher billeted on a verandah and sharing her dressing room with a twelve year old boy. Miss Ruth Don, President of the Queensland Teachers Union (QTU) from 1951 till 1953, remembers collating a survey conducted on boarding conditions for one teacher schools throughout Queensland in the 1940s:

Some of the conditions [we found] were that girls had to share a room with kids they taught. They would take them if they would help with the housework, do their own ironing. There were many positions where girls had to do their own washing and ironing but the boys didn't [though] some boys had to help with the gardening. Conditions were worst up in North Queensland, inland from Cairns, on the Tableland. I think [it was because] living conditions in North Queensland in those days were of a lower standard. An example was the bath, the shower was galvanised iron put around the post of the tank above...out in the yard and they had to go out in the yard [to have a shower]. Now that was a living condition that they accepted in those days. It was all right in North Queensland but it was pretty cold if it was in West Queensland [in winter]. Living standards were lower there and people went out to them from the living standards they were used to, whereas the people [who lived there] were used to it.

This perceptive observation probably explains the cheerful descriptions that some of the women gave of what would have appeared very primitive accommodation to a city girl. One described her living conditions at Midgenoo, near Tully in 1924:

It was a little old house. They didn't have a spare bedroom. They put a curtain screen in the living room and had my bed made up there. Later on they had a little bedroom added on. I had privacy. To have a bath I would take the tub into my room or else I would go down to the creek and have a bath there...you weren't afraid of people roaming around. Later on they put a little shower room up and for the water we would have to pump it up by windmill out of the creek. They only had one little tank.

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27 Ibid., p.191.
29 D. Berkley, Interview.
Another teacher described her accommodation in Pittsworth in about 1960:

Again accommodation was a problem but I found a little place, it was really one room but they had blocked off part of it for a bedroom and a tiny little cubicle for a bathroom and the rest was the kitchen...one of the happiest homes I've ever been in. There was a dish to wash up in and a hole in the floor so you could throw your washing up water out but you had to remember that underneath the house there was a bucket you had to empty every day. You had to cut your own wood. The toilet was in the backyard.

You had to have a kerosene tin on the stove to boil your water for a bath. No doubt after boarding with the milkman's family in Gladstone and then spending the following year in a dormitory at the Y.W.C.A. hostel in Brisbane, this teacher found that the privacy and independence was bliss. However both women were raised in North Queensland so they were probably familiar with the standard of living conditions they encountered.

The transfer system was also a lottery, frequently conducted in an arbitrary manner, especially if you were single. Miss Don described the unfairness of a system in which "...single people, no matter how long they had been teaching, were sent hell, west and crooked." One teacher, in talking about how happy she was to be given her home town [Tolga] as her first appointment, said "...and then a new headteacher with a daughter who was a teacher came, so I was transferred away to Julia Creek". Another teacher who had been six months in her first school and was very happy there, describes how she was transferred:

Then this phone call came from Townsville Regional Office and I thought "What have I done?" Mr [the Regional Director] said "We've selected you to go to Brisbane to train with a team from Professor Schonnell's group to work with retarded children". I was just settling down...just getting to know people. I said "I don't want to go, thank you Mr". He said

30 N. Bowers, Interview.  
31 R. Don, Interview.  
32 I. Moynihan, Interview.
"Listen girlie, you go or it's Mt Garnet". I said "Oh. Oh. Yes Sir". So I went to Brisbane. I really didn't want to go, I was so happy there. Her experience illustrates that single teachers, especially young ones, were seen as a pool of people who could be easily and cheaply transferred. This teacher, who was transferred several times because of Departmental whim, blamed the preferential treatment afforded married teachers, especially married women:

If they [married women] had married straight from college and got plum schools and stayed there and you came along and were just settling down...making friends...joining clubs. I think the Department was very unfair with the business about married women...you [single people] were transferable. I think they also looked at the monetary angle...usually the single males and females had no furniture. I had no furniture. I had my couple of cases and as I taught more I gathered more cases with books and things like that. If they had to transfer a married man there was him, his wife, his children, his furniture. Think of the cost, whereas with me they got out of it very often with just [the cost of] a second class sleeper.

Another teacher was a widow and the sole support of a son:
When I was leaving Innisfail to come down to Nambour, they refused to pay for the transport of my desk and other small effects. I didn't have much, we lived in two rooms in a boarding house. I think there was desk and a bookcase. I applied to have my effects transported [at Departmental expense] and the reply came back along these lines: "All female officers in this Department are considered as single officers and there is no entitlement for them to have their effects paid for on transfer. Furthermore there are many male officers in this Department who also have dependants such as mothers and fathers and those male officers do not expect to have the effects of these people paid for". It was something like that. They needn't have

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33 N. Bowers, Interview. Norma Bowers was then teaching at Parramatta State School. Cairns was then part of Northern Region. She remembered that her headteacher was offended that the Regional Director had not followed Departmental protocol and communicated with her through him. It is ironic that this Regional Director is on record in Education Regions in Queensland (Brisbane 1988), p.31, as being angry with head office for effecting inter-regional transfers without informing him.

34 Ibid.
added that nasty bit on the end. I took it to the Union and they succeeded in getting me my money.35

One teacher remembers that she was caught up in arbitrary transfers twice, once as a single women and once because she was married. She said she taught at New Farm for eighteen months "...and then a married woman wanted New Farm". Later when she was near retirement she was transferred from the school next door to her home to another school about twenty-five kilometres away on the ground that she was one of "...these married women who sit in there in Proserpine". When informed she was near retirement the staffing inspector's response was "Let her resign then". That would have meant the loss of over ninety thousand dollars in superannuation.36 The staffing inspector's reason articulates one of the causes of resentment between teachers: married women were seen to be given preferential treatment in not being eligible for transfer.

The issue of married women and transfer has rights and wrongs on both sides. This teacher remembered that "...if a married woman got into a school they generally left her there,"37 though she could not remember that any married men who had settled were ever unilaterally transferred. However it is true that, because the Department needed their services, married women were able to insist on being left in a school and, technically, the married men could have been transferred. There is no breakdown of statistics available which shows the percentage of married men given unrequested transfers. The impression the interviewees had was that married men, like married women who had settled in a town, were left there unless they requested a transfer.

Married women may have had an advantage regarding transfers but they were at a distinct disadvantage regarding tenure of employment. In 1902 a new regulation required female teachers to resign upon marriage; listed as a minor regulation in the Teachers' Journal - then called the Queensland Education Journal - it elicited no comment. After 1902, only those married

35 U. Hughes, Interview.
36 D. Stagg, Interview.
37 Ibid.
women who were widowed, divorced or deserted were employed. In 1940 a severe shortage of teachers prompted the Department to change its policy. Married women were re-employed as temporary teachers at the lowest rank of the salary scale - Assistant Teachers on probation - until 1942. Thereafter a married woman readmitted within three years of resigning was paid at her previous classification level; those re-admitted after more than three years spent six months on probation and then, subject to a satisfactory inspection, were paid at their previous classification. This represented a fair arrangement; what was not fair was the "temporary" nature of their appointment, used by the Department to deny access to zone allowances, promotion, longservice leave, sick leave or full holiday pay.

When it was coming up to Christmas time we [the married women] would all be saying [to each other] "Have you got your letter?" and then a week before the holidays on the Friday you'd get a letter saying "Your contract is terminated". We were only temporary and our contract could be terminated with a week's notice. If you didn't get it [the letter] then you knew you were right for the next year. If you were put off you got pay up to the end of December but you didn't get the January.

On top of the ignominy of yearly dismissal married women also found themselves something of a political football. In 1957 when Labor was in power the Minister said:

The position cannot be regarded as satisfactory whilst so many married female teachers are being re-admitted to the service. It is admitted that these ladies are rendering a very valuable service to the State, the department and

39. Ibid.
40. "Is Marriage a Crime?", Queensland Teachers' Journal (QTJ), vol.69, no.1, February 1964. The Editorial called for a casual loading of "in the vicinity of ten percent" to offset these advantages.
41. D. Staff, Interview. Later the holiday pay ruling was amended. In February 1964 the QTJ had listed the disadvantages, but the QTJ, April 1964, p.86, reported the Minister's reply to a question, part of which was "...every effort is made to preserve their [temporary teachers'] rights in respect of leave benefits. If a teacher's services are terminated on December 31 and she is re-employed at the commencement of the school year, salary for the whole of the vacation is paid".
the children and I do not know what the department would have done without them. The unmarried female teacher feels that she and she alone is liable to be transferred and that brings about a feeling of discontent which will possibly be removed when we get sufficient male teachers.\(^{42}\)

In 1960 the Coalition was in power and Mr Pizzey, the Minister, showed he agreed with his political opponents on employing married women. In answer to a question as to how many married women were employed in (a) primary and (b) secondary schools, he replied, proudly, it seems:

(a) 144; (b) 127. By way of interest I might add that it is probably the lowest percentage of any Education Department in the world.\(^{43}\)

Later in the year he responded to the granting of a pay increase for teachers:

Following yesterday's pay rise, the State Government will dismiss 700 married women teachers on the temporary staff at the end of the year. They are now at schools throughout the State, and will have to leave because the Education Department cannot continue to finance their employment.\(^{44}\)

Despite this comment, attitudes towards the married women started to change during the early 1960s, firstly in the Union. Later the Department modified its stance on holiday pay and on dismissals. There seems to have been a "roster" system which can be seen if one Christmas vacation, December 1963-January 1964, is looked at more closely. In December 1963, 329 married women had their services terminated.\(^{45}\) The actual number of married women employed in 1963 is not available but as there were 1440 in 1965\(^{46}\) then the number 1000 probably represents a conservative estimate for 1963. Using this figure approximately 33 percent

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\(^{42}\) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates (QPD)*, vol.215, 1956-57, p.1226.

\(^{43}\) *QPD*, vol.229, 1960-61, p.2250.

\(^{44}\) Spaull & Sullivan, *A History of the Queensland Teachers' Union*, p.267. The discrepancy between 271 employed at the beginning of the year and 700 by September shows how many were re-employed as the year progressed.

\(^{45}\) *Queensland Teachers Journal (QTJ)*, March 1964, p.41. The breakdown of schools also suggests that a roster system operated. 1963 seems to have been Toowoomba's turn, among others. there are at least 10 teachers from Toowoomba schools on the list. Only one teacher from Cairns was on the list, and none from Proserpine.

\(^{46}\) Clarke, *Female Teachers in Queensland State Schools*, p.88.
of married women had services terminated.

What may have started out as a cost-cutting exercise had become politically expedient: married women were to be seen as a pool from which any shortfall in teaching numbers could be filled. The Minister was asked in Parliament on 7 November 1963, if it was his intention to sack married women school teachers at the completion of the year's school term, and, if so, why, and how many would be affected by the decision? His reply was as follows:

...Young teachers graduating from the Teachers' Colleges will be appointed to the staffs of State schools as from January 1, 1964. These appointments will reduce the number of vacancies in the teaching service available to temporary teachers and many of them will have their temporary appointments terminated as from December 31, 1963. At present the distribution of attendances in primary and secondary schools in 1964 is being assessed and the allocation of teaching staffs is being made. It is not possible at this stage to determine with accuracy the number of temporary teachers whose services will not be required immediately in the new school year...47

The three hundred and twenty-nine women paid off thus spent the Christmas vacation unsure whether they had a job to go to in 1964.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that those not re-appointed would soon be eligible for long-service leave.

One year I was put off and we [another married woman and I] were left off for six months...that's when we lost everything. Both of us were put back in mid-June. If you were off for six months you lost everything.48

The implications in terms of her long service leave entitlements were brought home to this woman when she and her husband, also a teacher, applied for long service leave. When they married she had been in the service for eleven years. Her husband had left teaching for several years and

47 OTJ, April 1964, p.86.
48 D. Staff, Interview. The actual period was three months. A three month break in employment meant a teacher lost accumulated benefits such as long service leave. There are many other examples of married women being treated this way. Clarke, Female Teachers in Queensland State Schools, p.46, and R. Bonnin (ed.), Dazzling Prospects, pp.89-90.
only returned to it six months before they married. She described her experience thus:

I had to resign when I married but I was re-appointed [at the start of the school year] about two weeks later. I taught right through then with those breaks when they used to put us off. When we went on long service leave, Les had enough leave due to go [for the period we wanted] and I had taught longer than Les and I had to take seven weeks without pay to go [for that length of time].

Married women therefore fulfilled three useful roles: as frontline troops to keep the schools staffed; as scapegoat for Departmental transfer policies; to keep staffing costs down. Making married women permanent would have had implications for transfer, holiday pay and leave entitlements. It may also have had another undesirable outcome: more women may have started thinking of teaching as a career, and thus wanted real access to the promotional ladder.

That the Department was starting to rethink its policy is shown by the experience of this teacher who was bonded to the Department to pay back a scholarship.

It was the end of 1966. The Principal came up to me when he knew I was getting married, shoved this bit of paper under my nose and said "You've got to resign". I said "I'm not going to. Why should I resign?" He said "It's written in the regulations". I said "But I'm not going to. If I resign I'll break my contract". He said "But you've got to. It says here in the regulations you've got to". I said "I'm not going to". We had a lot of to-ing and fro-ing about that but I didn't resign. They didn't ever do anything about it. They just let it go on.  

Not many young teachers, faced with such a demand from the Principal, the most powerful authority figure in their everyday working lives, would have been so resolute. In retrospect the Department's response is understandable: the Union had become increasingly restless on the issue, and by 1965 it was Union policy that women should not be compelled to resign on

49 D. Graham, Interview.

50 In February 1964 the Editorial of the QTJ asked "Is Marriage a Crime?"
marriage. This instance, in which a young women wanted to honour her contract but was being placed in the wrong by being forced to resign, would have played into their hands.

To be fair to the Department, many women accepted temporary status as a trade off for no transfers.

Most of the married women I knew regarded it as a temporary position, but it was very handy money coming in. As their attitudes changed, the attitude of the Union and finally the Department changed. In 1969 married women were granted permanent status.

The Department's treatment of married women is a thumbnail sketch of their treatment of women teachers in general: they were needed as a dependable component of the classroom teaching force but they were to be paid as little as possible, denied equality in promotion and superannuation, and then chastised if they were unwilling to comply with the role designated for them. Pay, allowances, promotion and superannuation exemplify the subordinate position of female teachers.

In keeping female teachers in their place the Department was supported by Parliament, the Queensland Industrial Commission, the Public Service Board and, for many years, the Queensland Teachers Union. It was possible to discriminate against women teachers because of the widespread social attitude that a woman was not equal to a man. Many women as well as men acquiesced in institutionalised inequity. One who did not and who helped lead the battle first within the Union and then through the Union was Ruth Don. Asked why it was such a long struggle to obtain equity for women in pay, superannuation, permanency and promotion, Miss Don observed that the real barrier to women gaining promotion was

...a social attitude...[that to promote a women would be to place her in a position] superior to and in charge of men. You can take the whole thing logically through [all the issues]: women had to take the inferior position.

51 Clarke, *Female Teachers in Queensland State Schools*, p.42.
52 G. Mischlewski, "Grace Mischlewski", in Bonnin (ed.), *Dazzling Prospects*, p.91.
54 R. Don, "Ruth Don" in Bonnin (ed.), *Dazzling Prospects*, p.75.
That social attitude underlies it, whether you talk about superannuation, equal pay or promotion.\(^{55}\)

The Equal Pay Issue and judgments handed down by the Queensland Industrial Commission (previously the Court of Industrial Arbitration) epitomise this social attitude and how, as the attitude changed, judgments followed suit. In 1919 the Queensland Teachers' Union took a case for equal pay to the Court of Industrial Arbitration. The case was unsuccessful. This is not surprising given that when Blanche Ludgate,\(^{56}\) who was helping put the Union's case, remarked that "a man is naturally biased in favour of a man", Judge McCawley, the Commissioner replied "We will admit that".\(^{57}\) The Judgment is important because it set a precedent followed for the next fifty years.

Do males and females perform the "same work" within the meaning of the same Section [of the Industrial, Conciliation and Arbitration Act of 1916]? This Court has held that for the section to apply the work done by either sex must be the same in kind, quantity, and quality. In one sense all teachers perform the same work teaching; in that sense the teacher of carpentry and the teacher of needlework perform the same work. But the Court is not confined to the consideration of generic resemblances, and is entitled to examine with reasonable particularity the various species of work done by male and female teachers respectively. Females are more suitable for kindergarten work and the teaching of girls; males for the teaching of boys, certainly the older boys. In certain other grades their merits may be equal. In the teaching of certain subjects males excel; in the teaching of other subjects females excel. But it has not been, and cannot be, proved that the work of men and woman teachers is equal, for the educational work of a woman cannot be brought to a common denominator with that of a man; women are better teachers for some children than are men teachers; men are better teachers than women in other grades. It cannot be said that the work of male and female teachers is the same; the work the female teacher can do,

\(^{55}\) R. Don, Interview, Brisbane, 30 September 1992.

\(^{56}\) Blanche Ludgate's story would itself be an interesting study as she upgraded her qualifications from provisional teacher to Class I status, held a Bachelor of Arts degree and taught the Scholarship class at East Brisbane State School.

\(^{57}\) Clarke, *Female Teachers in Queensland State Schools*, p.34.
taken as a whole, and the work she does do, differ in kind and quality from the work of the average male teacher, though in certain respects and in certain particular kinds of work there may be little or no difference. It may be that the work of the female teacher is of more importance in kind or more valuable in result than the work done by males; but this will always be a matter of opinion; results in education are not measurable. But even if the work of the female is shown to be equally or more important, or equally or more valuable, it is not established that the work is the "same work"; for importance and value are not the only attributes which must be compared. Nor can the word "profit" in the expression "returning the same return or profit" be regarded as applying to anything except business profit. The Minister for Public Instruction is not conducting a business, certainly not a business which makes "profit" in the commercial sense.  

McCawley's grounds for rejecting the claim have been justly described as "very specious arguments". However in fairness it must be appreciated that he was a product of his time. As well, legal results frequently have little to do with justice and much to do with precedent and the law as interpreted within the social context of the time. Social context is the key to understanding why the case was lost. To again quote Ruth Don: "...the public wasn't ready to accept it [equal pay]".  

What the public was ready to accept is shown by another part of the judgment in which rent allowances to married assistants was disallowed on the grounds that "...the salary for male teachers being, as directed by law, fixed as for a married man with three children...". Teaching was seen by the public as a career for a man who would have to support a family, but as a job for a woman until she married. Therefore the pay scales should reflect that. That women who started teaching in the twenties and thirties accepted this is supported by the evidence from teachers themselves. One, who

60 R. Don, Interview.
61 *QIG*, vol.5, 1920, p.14. The married assistants referred to were all men since from 1902 onwards all married women had to resign.
taught from 1924 till 1938 when she married, answered the question "Were you aware that men were paid more?" as follows:

Yes. Well I thought "They're paying men more because men have got to earn the money [for a family]. When they get married the women would drop out. I thought that way, not that their work would be any better than ours."

Another who taught during the first half of the thirties pointed out:

We expected it [different pay]. We were the lucky ones. We were better off than a lot of people. We had a job and it was a secure job.

The evolution in women's attitudes towards equal pay can be seen in later teachers. A woman who began teaching in the fifties said of the equal pay issue:

Equal pay didn't worry me because that was the way it was in any job...it was only later on we thought "Well why shouldn't we [get equal pay]?" But as a teacher I have resented being beside some lazy fellow, seeing kids fail because nothing much is done, going home with all this work [corrections] and get less money. To myself I'd think "That's not fair". But that's as far as it went.

By the 1960s most women wanted equal pay and their comments show this. A teacher who began teaching in the sixties expressed the issue in very definite terms:

I can remember teaching alongside some man and knowing that I got less pay than that man but I worked twice as hard. I could not see why I was paid less.

Even older teachers had changed their stance. A lady who began teaching in the forties said:

For years the women said "We work as hard as the men". You'd get the odd one who was happy with things as they were...and those ladies who used to

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62 D. Berkley, Interview.
63 E. Kinzbrunner, Interview.
64 N. Bowers, Interview.
65 D. Graham, Interview. The generational gap in attitudes is demonstrated by comparing this comment with the comment in footnote 65 as the two women are mother and daughter.
come around, Miss Muldoon, the Union lady, we'd have a meeting and she'd give a talk. That was in the sixties.  

Though the change in female teachers' attitudes was necessary if equal pay was to be achieved, it was not enough; change in social attitudes in general and male teachers' attitudes in particular was needed since men controlled the Union. After the failure of the Equal Pay Case in 1919-20, many powerful men in the Union faced about and opposed Equal Pay for almost thirty years.

This about face can partly be explained by the adroit manoeuvring of J.D. Story, who used the play divide and conquer to devastating effect. Then Under Secretary of the Department, he was advocate for the Crown in the 1919 Equal Pay Case. He had argued that women were not as efficient as men and that the law of supply and demand decreed men needed higher wages to be attracted to teaching. He also suggested that if the claim for equal pay was successful, the Department might assess teaching as women's work and provide a salary adequate to keep one person and not a married man with dependents. He also warned that another outcome would be that women would be able to compete with men for the positions of head teachers of mixed schools because they would have established equality of the sexes. Both these arguments were aimed at male teachers as much as at the Industrial Arbitration Court; reported in the Teachers Journal, they effectively discouraged male teachers from supporting equal pay claims.

In a study of opposition to equal pay as expressed the Journal (then the Queensland Education Journal, later the Queensland Teachers Journal),

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66 D. Stagg, Interview. This was the only interviewee active in the Union.
67 There have been 69 Presidents of the QTU of whom two have been women. There have been 16 General Secretaries, no women. The photos of Union Conferences are revealing as are the stories in Dazzling Prospects.
68 Clarke, Female Teachers in Queensland State Schools, p.34. The comments were reported in the QTJ, vol.26, no.7, 1920. The success of Story's strategy is shown that the reasons he gave for opposing equal pay were used by male teachers within the Union. The QIG, vol.9, 1924, p.190, reprinted an article from The Worker, 28 February, which argued for equal pay for women on the basis of justice and that otherwise women would take over men's jobs.
Clarke discerned two categories: ridicule and delay. An example of the growing opposition was that equal pay was included as part of a general log of claims in 1924, 1926, 1934, 1936, never as a claim in itself. None was successful. Justice McCawley's judgment had established a precedent whose importance is shown by the Judgment given in 1926:

The claim for equal pay for both sexes was very fully dealt with by the late President in his judgment of 27 September 1919. For the reasons given by him we think that the claim should be refused.

As well, economic conditions led to such a deterioration in all teachers' wages during the late 1920s and early 1930s, that as an issue equal pay was pushed on to the back burner, if not right off the stove. Ruth Don described what happened:

I still recall so vividly the early years of my teaching career. I started to teach in the mid-twenties. The country was in an economic recession. Our salary was cut by 6%. Then after three years the recession turned into a depression. We had a further cut of 10-15% (10% for the lower paid teachers, 15% for the higher). Furthermore our automatic classification salary increases were stopped. It was no use anyone trying to protest about such matters. By the Salaries Act we were denied access to the Industrial Court. As a result it wasn't until 1939 that we gained the 1929 level of our salaries.

A study of the *Queensland Industrial Gazette* during the 1930s shows the loss in all teachers' salaries. One example was in 1936 when the Court's Judgment reduced teachers' wages by amounts of between eleven and a quarter and twenty percent depending on the wage level. However since the Judgment also provided that:

The salary of any teacher shall not be hereby reduced below the rate actually being paid at present, nor shall the salary of any adult teacher be reduced below the State Basic Wage.

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69 Clarke, *Female Teachers in Queensland State Schools*, p.32.
70 *QIG*, vol.11, 1926, p.543.
72 *QIG*, vol.21, 1936, pp.50-55.
the effect was not felt until one moved to a higher classification. A similar Judgment was made in 1937. 73

Equal pay therefore was overshadowed as an issue by more pressing concerns. It was not till the mid-forties that women started to really pursue the issue in the branches. A salary scale awarded in 1945 meant that female wages relative to male wages were lower than in 1925. Table 3 uses a comparison of Class I Division I salaries to show the relativities. At 1945 QTU annual conference Ruth Don put forward a very strong case for equal pay. 74 The principle of equal pay was already part of Union policy and a minority group at Conference wanted it made a higher priority. A motion "That we as a Union approach the Arbitration Court to grant equal pay for the sexes, and that this be the only claim taken to the Court at that time" was moved. After discussion, in which several speakers, including G. Daughtrey (the General Secretary), urged maintenance of the status quo, the motion was lost. 75

That many of the male Unionists were against equal pay is not surprising: they were the beneficiaries of the difference in wage relativities in more than monetary terms. As early as 1919, the wily Story had pointed out that equal pay carried with it other connotations. One was positive discrimination for men in terms of promotion. How the system worked is perhaps best appreciated by considering two hypothetical teachers, same age, same classification, same competency, one male, one female and both applicants for a head-teachership. The male would automatically get the job because, since he was paid more, he was considered senior. Many very able men were promoted and some very limited men; no woman, however

74 QTJ, September 1945, pp.7-10. The article was reprinted in "A Century of Achievement", a special issue published to mark the centenary of the Union.
75 Ibid.
bright, was promoted to headship of a large Primary School. One lady who taught all her life described the frustration this could lead to:

You would have one of these very limited men as the head teacher in a school with some of these very bright women on staff. It was awfully frustrating because you couldn't get any improvements in the approach [to how the children were taught]. Some of these less bright fellows would be aware of changes needed but if he turned out to be one of those rigid fellows who tend not to look with great favour on ideas, it would be: "We've never done that before", "That wouldn't be practical". The ceiling would be there and your ideas would bump into it all the time.

It wasn't just the women's ideas which were bumping against a ceiling: supporters of equal pay had bumped into the ceiling constructed by those within the Union who wanted to keep the status quo. However this ceiling was broken through: the 1945 Conference motion was lost but the equal pay issue was back on the front burner and at the 1947 conference a similar motion was passed. An application made to the Arbitration Court in 1948 was refused; relativities were slightly improved, though not to their 1924 levels. In 1960 the Commission handed down an award which established that females should receive 90% of the male salary. If the intention was to keep a lid on the pot, it was too late: The International Labour Organisation (ILO), of which Australia was a member, had already passed an Equal Remuneration Convention, and New South Wales and New Zealand were phasing in equal pay. Social attitudes towards equality of the sexes had changed. In 1967 the Union took another application to the Commission. This time the application succeeded. Not all the Commissioners were in agreement. In support of their majority decision Commissioners Taylor and Self wrote:

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76 There had been female headteachers of Girls' and Infants' Schools, but as these schools were phased out and became mixed schools promotional opportunities for women shrunk. For a fuller discussion see Clarke, *Female Teachers in Queensland State Schools*, pp.29-33, 43-45.

77 U. Hughes, Interview.

78 *QIG*, vol.45, September-December 1960, pp.1080-1081.

79 Clarke, *Female Teachers in Queensland State Schools*, p.46.
...In our opinion, no narrow meaning should be given to the words "same work". It seems to us that the Legislature has expressed its will in clear and simple language and that this Commission should not endeavour to discover small and unimportant differences in work which, in the ordinary sense, and on the evidence adduced, is substantially the same. In our view, the work of the school teacher is to teach and instruct the class to which he or she has been assigned. The work under the Award in question is the same, although the particular problems may well be different, depending on the grade teacher is, at the time, called upon to teach...We would therefore grant the application and vary the Award to provide for the introduction of the principle of equal pay for female teachers...in four annual instalments, the first to operate as from the 1st January, 1968.\textsuperscript{80}

It is ironic that Ruth Don retired from teaching on the 31st December 1967 and never personally benefited from the equal pay decision.\textsuperscript{81}

Once equal pay had been gained it was inevitable that other conditions of employment such as permanency for married women, equal access to superannuation, allowances and promotional opportunity would follow, though some happened relatively quickly and some, such as the merit principle in promotion, took much longer.

The increase in numbers of female teachers seeking promotion is the living proof that many women now perceive teaching as a career not just a job. The establishment of the merit principle for promotion and the recently passed Equal Opportunity Legislation are proof that Parliamentarians also believe in equality of opportunity regardless of gender.

The stories of women who became teachers after 1920 provide glimpses of details in a much larger picture, a gradually moving piece of film that shows the evolution in better conditions and opportunities. The improvement in opportunities resulted from the efforts of many women who provided leadership for female teachers in their quest for equal opportunity first within the Union and then within the teaching profession. Some of the women who became teachers did not do so from a sense of vocation. However, though their motivations for becoming teachers varied, their stories reveal dedication and hard work in trying to help children learn.

\textsuperscript{80} QIG, vol.46, September-December 1967, pp.16-18.

\textsuperscript{81} R. Don, Interview.
Perhaps the last word should belong to a parent of one of the young charges:

With the Word List that you sent home for Kelly to learn. She seems to have a stumbling block with the word THIS. We her mother and I have tried always to get the word in her mind. But no sooner in then it's gone again. Thank God for teachers.  

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82 Letter to teacher, n.d., in possession of D. Stagg.
Table 3: Female Salaries as a % of Male Salaries

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<th>Year</th>
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<th>Female Salary</th>
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