

Union of Australian Women

Newsletter

WHAT'S ON-MAY 2015

Sunday 3 May 1.00pm	May Day March Opp Trades Hall, cnr Victoria and Russell Sts
Wednesday 13 May 10.30 - 12.30	UAW Organising Committee meeting First floor meeting room 1.3, Ross House
1.00 – 2.30	Subcommittee re submission to Royal Commission on Family Violence UAW office, 2 nd floor Ross House
Wednesday 13 May	2nd outing, National Wool Museum Geelong <i>Women of Empire 1914 – 1918</i> 26 Moorabool St Geelong Meet Southern Cross Station Waiting Room 10.30, to catch 11.00 train
Thursday 14 May 10.30 – 12.30	UAW Book Group First floor meeting room 1.3, Ross House
Thursday 21 May 11.00 – 2.00	UAW-Seniors Network Fourth floor meeting room 4.2, Ross House

UAW membership renewals for 2015

Thanks to the many members who have renewed their memberships.
We count on your continuing support to enable us to keep our voice strong.
If membership payment has slipped your mind, may we give you a gentle reminder?
\$20/\$30.

THE SUFFRAGIST AND THE SQUATTER: ANNIE LISTER AND P S WATSON.

Written and published by Norman C Hutchinson.

Reviewed by Morag Loh

Annie Lister and Sydney Watson, the protagonists of this concise and meticulously referenced history, were a Melbourne couple who, from the 1890s until well into the twentieth century, enjoyed the advantages of inherited wealth. They also worked to achieve the vote and equal opportunities for women and to institute practical care for poor and disabled children. They believed in racial and gender equality and in treating others as they themselves wanted to be treated. In later life, finding that these values were embraced by Christian Scientists, they joined that US based Church.

The suffragist, Annie Lister, was a first class scholar who graduated BA from Melbourne University in 1891 aged 25. By 1893 she was a dedicated feminist activist, helping establish the Warrawee Club, the fore-runner of the present Lyceum Club and corresponding with English suffragists, seeking their advice on how to form a woman's suffrage society in Melbourne. When the United Council for Women's Suffrage was formed in 1894 Lister wrote one of its first pamphlets, arguing that women needed the vote in order to overcome the many injustices they and their children suffered. Its arguments later became part of Vida Goldstein's platform when she stood for the Senate in 1903. Lister was on the committee of the Shilling Fund which helped establish the Queen Victoria Hospital in 1896 and, when women won the vote federally, she became the first secretary of the Women's National Council of Australia. By now she was a well known and popular public speaker, not only here but by invitation in the USA, where she showed 'a remarkable knowledge of laws and conditions affecting women.'

On a personal level she was adventurous and defied convention, travelling unchaperoned to Queensland in 1897 to visit Sydney Watson, whom she married in 1898. She was never known as Mrs Sydney Watson but firstly as Mrs Annie Watson- Lister and, after ten years marriage, as Mrs Lister Watson. When the couple went to the Alaskan goldfields in 1898 she tramped alongside the men in the harsh, freezing conditions and, in hard times, opened a restaurant.

Sydney's family had profited from the opportunities the empire offered to Britons. His grandfather was a senior officer in the army in India and his father was able to obtain land in Australia and later to extend his holdings. The Watson men worked hard for their wealth. Teenaged Sydney had to learn how to run a country store including how to care for, round up and slaughter animals for meat to sell. When land became available in Queensland he and his brothers went there, riding hundreds of miles on horseback and camping to mark a claim to 'squat'. They witnessed the murderous dispossession of the indigenous people, were able briefly to shelter a small group of them and Sydney became close friends with a couple of young men of the Kalkadoon people.

Annie and Sydney were active in their communities right to the end. Some of the organisations Annie helped found are still well known. She was on the executive committee of the Free Kindergarten Union, which was established in 1908. She was the first President of Yooralla, which began as a free kindergarten for crippled children in 1918. In 1925, three years before her death, when 50 leading business and professional women established the Australian Business and Professional Women's Club she was its first treasurer. Sydney became a Christian Science practitioner, working to bring comfort to others, including servicemen in the 1914-18 War. He was a generous benefactor to causes in which he believed.

Norman Hutchinson has made good use of archival material. Passages from letters give immediacy, bringing us voices from the past describing people and places and supplying insights

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THE SUFFRAGIST AND THE SQUATTER cont'd

into what was important to the writers –business matters, family ties, food, games, opinions. The photographs provide interesting and informative documentation of people, times and places. The book is well designed and easy to hold. Best of all it tells us of two people, well-known during their lifetimes but fallen from view more recently, who made substantial contributions to building a fairer and more humane Australia.

Copies of the book are available from UAW member Pauline Hutchinson.

FURY. Women write about sex, power and violence.

Review by Anne Sgro

A new book, edited by Samantha Trenoweth, has just hit the bookshops. It has contributions from a range of writers, both Australian and beyond, and revisits the issue of violence against women through fiction, memoir and essay. As Trenoweth states in the Introduction, *“Violence against women is not an aberration – a monstrous exception to the rule. Violence against women is rooted in cultures of inequity, injustice and entitlement”*. She quotes the 2013 UN Commission on the Status of Women which suggested that nations must tackle *“the structural and underlying causes...including gender discrimination, inequality, unequal power relationships between men and women, gender stereotypes, poverty as well as their lack of empowerment.”*

The contributions are uneven but varied and interesting.

Anne Summers recounts the establishment of the refuge Elsie in 1974 by a handful of young women. Its influence was extraordinary.

Mandy Sayer writes of the so dangerous occasions when she and her mother tried to leave her violent step-father, and refers to a recent (2014) murder of a woman who had taken out an Apprehended Violence Order against her husband.

Natasha Stott Despoja states that we must deal with it as a society, urging us all to help end the scourge of violence.

There is an extraordinary and deeply moving account of how **Susan Chenery** fell under the spell and power of a charming abuser in Italy that almost cost her life.

Clem Bastow recommends that we begin to take real action. *“Social media has provided feminism with the power to disseminate ideas at lightning speed. But, as Greer said in 1971, ‘reaction is not revolution.’* Hash tag campaigns have well highlighted what is going on, but we now need to *‘take the anger away from social networks and place it solidly back in the real world.’*

It was great to re-read part of Julia Gillard’s now famous Misogyny Speech, although it did make me wish that she had spoken with such passion and feeling more often in her period as Prime Minister.

Helen Razer also refers to Germaine Greer, who called for a radical break with the past – not through increasing the numbers of women in the male workforce but through *“renouncing those institutions (such as media, law and business) that many of today’s feminists look to for aid...”* and believes that *“we need to take more than sexism out of our culture in order to take the violence and injustice out of it.”*

Meena Kandasamy writes about rape culture in India; there is the response of young women in Bristol, UK, to female genital mutilation; there is an account of working with children and young teenagers about gendered behaviour in Glasgow; and many more.

The contributions range from personal to general, but it is all political. **Fury** is another contribution to the discussion, and a call to action. While the subject matter is grim there is resilience and determination in these pages. It is worth a read. Borrow the book from your library.

HAVE WE LEARNED ANYTHING YET?**By Anne Sgro**

If we are to honour those who died in the 'war to end all wars' then we must actively work for peace. I have felt ambivalent, to say the least, about much of the commemoration of Gallipoli and the centenary of Anzac. There has been jingoism, commercialization, military patriotism along with the stories of sacrifice and heroism. But, too often, the stories we tell are only of Australians, giving an isolated understanding of our experiences. History is seen as a source of pride not of understanding and too little has been learned.

I have been heartened by the number of alternative, broader views of the conflict that have offered a greater understanding of what happened, who was involved and where. Gatherings, exhibitions and discussions have been organised by a range of organisations including the Medical Association for Prevention of War, the Anzac Centenary Peace Coalition, churches and community organisations, municipal councils, the ABC and galleries. The 'Age' has published a series of thoughtful, moving articles that have presented a more realistic, broader picture that included Aboriginal and Chinese participants, Turks, Indians and Africans.

WW1 was a dreadful war that brought death, destruction, hunger and desperation. It laid the foundations of WW2 and, by redrawing boundaries and establishing protectorates, set the scene for the present horrors of the Middle East. The Centenary has given us much talk about war but not much about peace.

Australia is sending 300 troops to Iraq. Why? Because we are doing the bidding of our American ally? What will be gained? Who will benefit? Are we prepared to deal with the trauma and despair of at least a percentage of those soldiers when they return? We need to be aware of the human and health costs of war. What will be the cost to help repair the damage done to combatants, or will returned soldiers be on their own to fight their demons? Almost 50,000 Australian Vietnam veterans suffer long-term damage to their health.* Unlike the US, where Congress must give approval or the UK where the House of Commons does likewise, in Australia the Prime Minister can decide whether or not to commit troops, in the absence of parliamentary debate. The UAW supports the Greens in the proposal that such a decision should be made by Parliament.

It is known that diplomacy and foreign aid are ways of combating violence, particularly when communities and women in particular are educated and empowered. Yet Australia has drastically cut our foreign aid.

Australia is the world's second biggest weapons importer. We are one of the biggest military spenders in our Asia-Pacific region (5th in 2011).*

This century we have supported the US in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The 2500 US Marines rotating through northern Australia illustrate the increasing integration of Australian and US forces.

Australia should be supporting a global treaty to create a world free of nuclear weapons. There are over 20,000 nuclear weapons in the world. At least nine countries have nuclear weapons, and others are developing nuclear technology.

Armed conflict costs millions of civilian and combatant lives, and damages many more. A tiny proportion of the billions spent on war could eradicate poverty and hunger and send all children to school. If we are serious about commemorating Anzac we need to also acknowledge the sadness, waste, stupidity and uselessness of war, and work towards peace. No more 'business as usual.' Otherwise, what have we learnt?

*From Medical Association for Prevention of War

WOMEN'S HISTORY CENTRE –EXCITING NEW INITIATIVE FOR VICTORIA by Cath Morrison

The Women's HERitage Centre Victoria (WHCV) Committee was formed in response to a groundswell of feeling arising from the forum 'Keeping Women's Records in Victoria'. This forum was held in August 2013 in Melbourne, convened by Dr Deborah Towns from the League of Women Voters.

I attended the forum on behalf of the UAW. As a former academic and public librarian I have a considerable interest in the preservation of historical records and particularly in preserving the often hidden or lost history of women so this forum was an opportunity not to be missed.

Attendees at the forum expressed frustration at the apparent lack of interest of the major collecting institutions in keeping women's records. These institutions are governed by collecting policies (and funding issues): the State Library of Victoria, for example, focuses on records of state interest (which may in some cases encompass the records of women); the Public Record Office of Victoria is mandated to collect state government records. Many of the women present at the forum could tell of records by and about women and women's organisations being lost, destroyed or thrown away, and shared knowledge about records currently housed in homes and garages, inaccessible through lack of information about them.

Following the forum Judy Maddigan (former Victorian Speaker) and Judith Graley MP began a consultation process with interested women, bringing them together in June 2014 to form a small Steering Committee to move forward with a 'Women's Archive' proposal. I have been a member of the Steering Committee since its inception. Since the first meeting of the committee, issues about space in repositories have become even more critical. In late 2014, a plea from the YWCA to have their records curated and managed could not be heeded because none of the traditional repositories have the space and funding to do so. Our UAW archives are housed at Victoria University but many UAW members would also have collections of historical value. Unfortunately digitising of records is very costly (as of course is storage of paper records) so fund raising will be imperative for this project.

In 2015 the Women's HERitage Centre Victoria Inc.'s Constitution was endorsed to take the original Women's Archive forum proposals forward into reality. The Women's HERitage Centre Victoria (WHCV), once up and running, will collect, record, arrange, support and provide information and education resources to enhance access to the history of women in Victoria, and provide an information base for records that are held in other locations. As well as being a repository of historical information the Centre will also encompass a space to celebrate women in contemporary Victoria culture.

The Steering Committee is now inviting interested Victorian women to join a mailing list so as to be kept informed of progress as the Steering Committee continues with the establishment of the Centre. I have emailed a copy of a letter of invitation from the Committee President, Judy Maddigan, to all members who receive the UAW Newsletter by email, and a print copy is enclosed with this Newsletter.

A Victorian HERitage Centre Victoria Launch will be held in 2015 and members on the mailing list are to be invited to the launch to hear the latest developments in this endeavour. Many women already have asked to join the mailing list and many more will be most welcome.

All interested UAW members are now invited to participate in this exciting development by registering your support and joining the WHCV mailing list. Please send your email address to [Judith Graley{at}parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:Judith.Graley@parliament.vic.gov.au) (with WHCV mailing list, in the subject line).

Southern Branch Report - April 2015**By Mairi Neil**

On Saturday, April 18th, a baker's dozen gathered to hear UAW President Anne Sgro revisit UAW history by referencing the excellent book *Left Wing Ladies* and her own long association with the organisation. A timely reminder of why it is important we remain resolute in the fight for social justice. To paraphrase Paul Keating, we continue to be ordinary women achieving extraordinary things!

Prior to introducing Anne, Amy who has battled recent illness and thrived, read out a list of apologies: Val Campbell, Shirley Hynes, Theresa Battaglia and Jan Kennedy. She acknowledged in her welcome to Anne that we are fortunate to have someone prepared to come from Coburg, a drive that took more than 1 1/2 hours through horrendous traffic. (We'll definitely have to ensure the Andrews Labour Government keeps its commitment to improve public transport!)

Anne reminded us the UAW was 65 years old this year and we need to celebrate and acknowledge our aims of peace, social justice, gender equity and a fair go for women. Aims still as relevant today, if not more so, than when the foundation members began the organisation.

In 1950, communities were recovering from WW2. Women needed equal pay and better housing. Change was needed - and they knew what they wanted. Those women would be amazed we still only earn 82% of the male wage! The founding women were from the Communist Party, the ALP and Christians from churches working for peace and social justice; the first president, Aileen Dickie, a devout Christian, was courageous and tenacious. Ordinary women with progressive values looked at ways to make change happen. They organised and attended international conferences, forums and community meetings. They challenged a conservative Australia with those in power pushing the message women must go back to the kitchen, housework and home. John Howard's white picket fence.

Many of the women who initiated radical change came from the southern area: Betty Olle, Molly Hadfield, Dot Young, Nola Barber, Eileen Cappocchi - over 15-20 years these women trail blazed, fundraising as well as lobbying. They understood practicalities and can take the credit for establishing 13 kindergartens, libraries, bus routes, and the election of female councillors and mayors.

When Zelda Soprano chained herself to railings, Yvonne Smith and Betty Olle were there too, drawing attention to UAW demands and ideals. Yvonne Smith achieved remarkable advances in the health field by setting up the DES Society for women affected by the morning sickness pill, which led to their children being born ill. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diethylstilbestrol>

The *Nothing on A Plate* exhibition illustrates what some in sensible shoes, hats and sturdy constitution can do! The well-known tram ride where the activists paid 75% of the fare great publicity, getting the population onside for the push for equal pay. The campaigns to expose how drinking in Women's Lounges in hotels cost more and for women to be allowed to drink where they wanted saw a lot of women chaining themselves to bar stools. It was about the principal of equal access and cost.

The equal pay campaign, usually carried out at demonstrations with placards hiccupped during the Vietnam War years because of a ban on placards. However, innovative UAW activists put slogans on aprons and walked single file or in pairs on the pavement - just not in bunches! The Kennett years saw an expansion of these crocodile marches - making a fuss in small groups: single file, placards plus a megaphone, stopping in key area so that 20 activists looked and sounded more like 100. The *Grandmothers Against Detention* have adopted similar tactics to ensure they take over the footpath. Aprons in the 60s, placards in the 90s and direct action still today as UAW activists use their voices to make a difference.

The equal pay campaign - equal pay for work of equal value is still to be won. Some occupations like teachers better placed than others, but areas considered traditionally women's work still lacks value. A car park attendant can earn more than a childcare worker. Pay equity still a necessity; despite huge advances basic demands still to be achieved.

Southern Branch Report April 2015

Our paid parental leave schemes are minimal. We should follow the Scandinavian model. Other than focusing on maternity leave we should have generous family leave and the blokes have to take leave too. Child-rearing is not just the women's responsibility, and women shouldn't have to sacrifice career advancement. We must change workplace attitudes and practice. Encourage employers and employees to look outside the square.

UAW wrote submissions for the Arbitration Commission on behalf of women workers in the sweat shop industry, lobbied for affordable, decent public housing in the post-war era. Anne commented how it seems like déjà vu with a lot of these issues, but our passion hasn't lessened. Methods of action and of organising had to change, we've kept up with digital technology and social media, recognised young women don't operate the way we did and do.

However, we are effective at putting in submissions and we'll be having our say into the Royal Commission into Family Violence. We've always opposed family violence even although in the 50s and 60s no one talked about it. UAW established friendships and relationships with Women's Liberation in Victoria and supported the movement setting up Women's Refuges in the 70s. Anne Summers piece in the book, ***Fury: Women Write About Sex, Power and Violence*** edited by Samantha Trenoweth explains the setting up of Elsie, the first women's refuge in Sydney and is a sobering read. <http://www.readings.com.au/review/fury-women-write-about-sex-power-and-violence-edited-by-samantha-trenoweth>

The UAW is proud of the long-standing campaign to free Heather Osland, who spent 141/2 years in gaol for the murder of her violent husband when it was her son who actually committed the killing. Anne reflected on how Dot Young spoke at a UAW forum and said, 'when I was 19 and had a small baby, I shot my father.' Many women suffer at the hands of abusive men with 32 killed this year already - 2 women a week.

The opportunity presented by the Royal Commission must not be wasted. If these deaths were attributed to terrorism there'd be public outcry for action; it would be classified as urgent. Everyone had something to say on the issue, giving Anne some good points to raise in the submission. Anne noted that ex-police commissioners, Christine Nixon and Simon Overland introduced some good initiatives and Ken Lay has continued their work. However what is wrong with our society that this violence against women and children continues?

There must be gender equity, society must value women and the work they do, their nurturing and caring roles as well as other contributions. Men are still seen as the breadwinner, blokes considered more important so the disparity continues. Men wouldn't punch their workmates and get away with it, yet they are violent at home.

When Germaine Greer wrote the groundbreaking **Female Eunuch in 1970** she said, we don't want what blokes want, for us gender equity recognition is about something different. <https://seminariolecturasfeministas.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/germaine-greer-the-female-eunuch.pdf>

Maybe we need to try different approaches to deal with violent men. In Glasgow they are taken into custody for 24 hours and there are programs in schools to change attitudes and behaviour. Maybe we should look at making men responsible with compulsory stints in prison.

We have to continue to look at the feminist dream of the 70s and work to create a fairer and more just society. Letter writing is important as well as other forms of action. We can work on politicians to change their attitude - case in point Kelvin Thomson is now prepared to reconsider his position on asylum seekers.

The UAW has a proud history of achievements and continues to fight for social justice and it was an interesting and uplifting afternoon for Southern Branch to hear from our President and be reminded why we meet regularly and what work we do and still have to do.

A letter had been prepared for the Minister of Immigration re 40 asylum seekers who have been kept in detention over 5 years and those present were asked to sign before we relaxed with a scrumptious afternoon tea. *(see page 8 for letter)*

INDEX to UAW NEWSLETTERS 2013 and 2014

Thanks to fabulous work by Cath Morrison, the Newsletter Indexes for 2013 and 2014 are now available. They are integrated by topic and title. A copy will be emailed to members on our Newsletter email system, and some hard copies will be available from the office. A copy can also be emailed on request to Cath (hannmorr[at]bigpond.net.au)

VALE KATHY BYRNE.

UAW member Kathy Byrne passed away on Friday 24 April after a long illness that she confronted with enormous courage, dignity and cheerfulness. Kathy joined the UAW after her retirement as a teacher, was a valued member of both the Organising Committee and the Book Group until her illness made that too difficult. She was also active with the Moonee Valley Peace Network. We will miss her.

Southern Branch letter to Peter Dutton, Minister for Immigration.

Australia is detaining over 40 people for undisclosed reasons. They are recognized as genuine refugees who cannot return home. But Australian authorities will not release them due to secret claims made against them by Australia's security agency ASIO. Without being told the grounds for their detention, they cannot challenge the accusations against them – a grave injustice.

After 5 years in detention, these people exhibit serious, irreversible psychological harm and some are suicidal. In August 2013 the UN found their detention is illegal and lacks judicial safeguards, and that their treatment is cruel, inhuman and degrading. The UN says they should all be released, offered rehabilitation and compensated. Crucially, Australia is obliged to change its migration legislation to conform with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

These gross violations of human rights causing immense human suffering warrant your most urgent and concerted attention. Please act immediately to end these abuses and ensure they are not repeated.

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