Proud to be a Rebel
The life and times of Emma Miller

PAM YOUNG
Pam Young was born in Tully, North Queensland, and moved to Brisbane during the depression in 1936. Her involvement with the labour movement dates back to when at the age of eleven she walked with her family from New Farm to the Stadium at South Brisbane to attend packed meetings on issues of the day. After attending Teachers Training College she taught for four years until she married. She has been Queensland editor of Our Women, the national journal of the Union of Australian Women, and has published in other journals and magazines throughout the country. Pam Young has written articles on Emma Miller for the Australian Dictionary of Biography, 200 Australian Women and Unsung Heroes and Heroines. She now lives in Brisbane with her family.
This marble bust of Emma Miller sits in the Trades and Labor Council office at Brisbane Trades Hall
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To Peg Peters
An introduction to the grandmother you never knew
Children should be taught the spirit of love instead of hate towards nations. Instead of children being told to revere dead admirals and generals, they should be told about Labor men like Keir Hardie and others who worked and lived for the good of the people. A soul like the late Mrs Miller was worth more reverence than their Wellingtons and Nelsons and Napoleons.

*Mr Gorman (Australian Peace Alliance), Woman Voter, 15 February, 1917*
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Dear Reader, there was a time when I thought I knew all there was to know about the Australian Labor Party. Not anymore, for the reading of this amazing story has shown some rather large holes in that fabric. It has always been my belief that you don’t have to be in need to concern yourself with the needs of others. So it was with our hero. The experiences of a frail English migrant and her colleagues in the continuing chase after women’s suffrage and improved working conditions and wages for all makes fascinating reading even as the ALP is being created.

We are borne along through Emma’s happy childhood (so different from others forced to work in mines or factories at that time) with her skilled bootmaker father never out of a job and a caring mother to help her through the personal difficulties a cleft palate presents. Showing an early concern for the plight of others, especially domestic servants, there soon developed an antagonism towards upper-class women who were their employers.

Married at eighteen and widowed at thirty-one with four children to care for, Emma becomes a seamstress and we find her working again in Brisbane after the death of her second husband, soon after migration to that warmer clime.

Every aspect of her own trade was quickly perfected and every degradation suffered by her fellow workers duly noted in those years so that after her third marriage — to widower Andrew Miller, almost thirty years her senior — she was able to move into full-time action bettering the lot of women and the urban poor.

Interestingly, the book includes a quote from the last public exhortation of Emma Miller at a meeting in the Toowoomba Botanic Gardens just days before her death in 1917. She stressed that for the women of the Darling Downs also there was “a need to play a part in the Labour Movement as it meant as much to them as the men”. That need remains.

Emma Miller had become known and respected nationally so it
was no surprise that there was mourning all over the country and that a public subscription fund resulted in the unveiling in 1922 of a memorial to her in the Brisbane Trades Hall. It stands today as solidly as she should remain in our hearts.

All will gain, as have I, from reading this book, an important contribution to our social history.

Margaret Whitlam
A marble bust of Emma Miller sits in the Trades and Labor Council office at Brisbane Trades Hall. The bust, which was publicly funded, perpetuates the memory of a woman who made a magnificent contribution to Queensland’s early history. Yet she has been largely forgotten. It is rare today to find anyone familiar with her name, and most of those who do know of her are ignorant of her place in history.

She not only witnessed, but also contributed to the political and social changes that took place during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries — a turbulent period of Queensland’s history. Orations at her funeral lauded a humane woman of courage, fearless in expressing her convictions and staunch in her beliefs; a pioneer and propagandist of the emerging labour movement; a recognised leader of Queensland women’s fight for the right to vote; and a friend and organiser of women workers and active supporter of the trade union movement. In spite of this activity, Emma Miller rarely gets a mention in books dealing with the history of the period, including those on women’s history which have dealt mainly with New South Wales and Victoria.

Australians are not very familiar with the Australian suffrage movement, but research shows that in Queensland the vote had to be fought for tenaciously against great opposition — opposition that was quite often insulting to women. The suffrage campaign is often equated with the Pankhursts and the British struggle about which much has been written. Comparatively little, however, has been written about Australia’s movement for the right to vote. Some prominence has been given to leaders like Vida Goldstein, Rose Scott, Louisa Lawson and Catherine Spence, but none to Emma Miller and Leontine Cooper of Queensland. Nevertheless, we are indebted to these women, with their ceaseless energy and indomitable spirit, and to the many others who were involved in campaigning; women in leading positions today are there because of these women. I hope this book will increase readers’ knowl-
edge of the Woman’s Equal Franchise Association and its consistent campaign over a decade to gain for women the right to vote in Queensland state elections. As WEFA member Mrs Sampson said at the unveiling of the bust of Emma Miller: “No history of the Labor movement in Australia would be complete unless it included a record of that body” (Daily Standard, 23 October 1922).

I hope an understanding of women’s pioneering role in the labour movement will be gained — their struggle against exploitation; their bid for the very right to work in male occupations such as tailoring and printing; and their struggle for the right to unionism and to be recognised as fellow workers, not harbingers of low wages and unemployment. “By ignoring women’s participation history books distort history and perpetuate the myth that women had no leaders and were passive spectators with nothing of importance to contribute, few achievements to give them pride, and no historical experience to draw on.” My research of Emma Miller’s life and times has proved this to be untrue. Women contributed much; they made history too and should be recognised for their part. The aim of this biography is to install Emma and her contemporaries in their rightful place in history and to develop pride and inspiration in their achievements. Though every effort has been made to identify these women fully, it has not been possible in all cases, since records of the times usually refer to them only as “Miss” or “Mrs”. Even where an initial is given, it is usually that of the woman’s husband.

Unfortunately, all but a few items from Emma Miller’s active life have been destroyed. There are clues in the wonderful published orations which indicate that she was very well known, but her actual activities often went unreported. Frequently her speeches were mentioned, but her words were rarely recorded except in the last decade of her life. The women’s page of the Worker, particularly when edited by Mary Lloyd, was a source of anecdotes and glimpses of her activities. Her grand-daughter Peg Peters recounted family anecdotes and permitted the use of the few existing records she had of Emma’s life. Apart from the Worker, the Daily Standard, and Woman Voter local newspa-
pers such as the *Daily Mail* and *Truth* also gave an insight into her prominent position in Queensland.

From childhood Emma spent her energy in the cause of freedom and the progress of humanity, and always retained the lifestyle and attitudes of the working class, so she left "no mansions or piles of wealth which could have been the case if she had decided to fight the selfish battle for herself alone. She left behind something more valuable". On the pages of women’s history, Australian history and that of the labour movement, she left an "indelible mark for good" (*Daily Standard* 23 January 1917).

The story of Emma Miller is also part of the history of the Labor Party. In the absence of any definite indication of when the spelling "Labor" first gained general acceptance, it has been spelt "Labour" in this text, except where "Labor" appears in quotations. I have also left words such as "Tailoresses" "needlewomen" and others in their original form, without changing to their non-sexist form, for authenticity.
I am indebted to Joe Harris who, when researching his book *The Bitter Fight* (University of Queensland Press, 1970), drew the attention of members of the Union of Australian Women to Emma Miller and her activities. In so doing, he stimulated my interest which was rekindled many years later when I was asked to write an entry on her for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.

I am grateful to many people for their encouragement and support during the course of this project. Many old and new-found friends kindly lent me books and expressed continual interest in the project. A bonus was meeting Emma Miller’s grand-daughter Peg Peters. My sincere thanks to her, to Jim Henderson, Raymond Evans, Joanne Watson, Ray Dempsey, Keith Macdonald, Clarrie Beckingham, Doris Webb, Kath Thomas, Alan Leary, Pam Crawford, Helen Trudgian, Patricia Fairhall, Richard Flynn and Carole Ferrier, and to the many others who took a kindly interest. Special thanks must go to my typist, my sister, Janet Henderson, for her patience, assistance and advice.

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My thanks also to the Australia Council for making it possible for me to visit Chesterfield, Emma Miller’s birthplace, as well as Salford and Manchester. This visit enabled me not only to research Emma’s life, but also to gain a better understanding of her origins and to meet people like Beryl and Basil Barker who share her outlook on life and are as politically active today as she was so
long ago. I thank them for the background advice they were able to provide on life in Chesterfield.

I am grateful to Michael Kinnane, Project Coordinator of the Commonwealth Trade Union Council, Brisbane, and to Annie Watson and Pat Quinn, his counterparts in London; through them I was able to contact Malcolm Pearce, Barry Johnson, Bob Windsor and Cliff Williams, whom I also thank. Staffs of the Local Studies Libraries of Chesterfield, Matlock and Salford were most helpful, as were those of the Fawcett Library (City of London Polytechnic), the Working Class Movement Library in Salford, and the Trade Union Congress Library in London. Especially appreciated was the help given by Josephine and Denis Taylor and their sons, of Manchester, and their son Mark, of Brisbane, who led me to them.

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Emma Miller and Kate Dwyer
Some leading Labour women
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*Justice to all, privilege to none*

Everyman his skill must try,
He must turn out and not deny;
No bloody soldier must he dread,
He must turn out and fight for bread.
The time is come you plainly see
The Government opposed must be.¹

Emma Miller was born in Chesterfield, Derbyshire on 26 June 1839, the daughter of Martha (née Hollingworth) and Daniel Holmes. The Victorian era had begun and the Industrial Revolution was in full swing. They were hard, but stirring times, marked by oppression and harsh conditions for the many and growing wealth and power for the few. Working people — men, women and children — were the victims of the new system, “unfortunate participants in a process of change which they could neither escape nor control”.²

In just a few decades, particularly in England’s north, picturesque villages had turned into industrial towns; tall, black chimneys belched smoke and soot over the workers’ dwellings that were crammed around the grimy, gloomy mills, and shrieking factory whistles summoned people to work, drowning out the early-morning bird songs. Life had lost its easy rhythm: speed, machinery, steam and constant toil now dominated their lives, sapping their strength. Fortunes were being made on the narrow shoulders of children forced to work long hours in dangerous, unhealthy conditions to supplement their father’s low wages. For this they received a pittance. Women, too, had become a cheap, servile source of labour, with most women receiving less than half of a man’s — itself inadequate — wage.

The employment conditions of women and children became the main focus of agitation and legislation in the 1830s and 1840s. The majority of women worked as domestics, but many others worked in mines or in the northern textile industry that set the pace of Britain’s industrial life. Working conditions were un-
comfortable and dangerous, with female spinners and weavers being herded into congested factories and mills. Here machines were so closely crammed and the floors so slippery that gruesome accidents were frequent. In the coal mines women were the “drawers”, crawling through the mine dragging along wagons of coal attached to them by a chain and a harness around the waist. In 1842, Betty Harris told the Children’s Employment Commission, “My clothes are wet through almost all day . . . I have drawn until I have had the skin off me. The belt and chain is worse when we are in a family way.” Exhausted young children were often beaten to force them to keep working for long hours. Margaret Gomley, a nine-year-old, told the commission, “They flog us down in the pit, sometimes with their hand on my bottom, which hurts me very much . . . I am poorly sometimes with bellyache, and sometimes with headache. I had rather play than go into the pit.” In such situations their parents were powerless to help dependent as they were on the children’s wages.

Derbyshire, a beautiful county of hills and dales, was economically dependent on coal mining, and Chesterfield was surrounded by mines. Women and girls, however, were never employed in Derbyshire pits. Many of the miners lived close to the coal mines but others lived in the town itself and walked many miles to work each day. Emma’s parents were filled with compassion at the sight of boys less than eight years old being led home from the pits by family members because their “legs, arms and back ached so bad” and they were too weary to keep walking alone. Collier boys examined by Dr Walker of Chesterfield during the Children’s Employment Commission of 1842 were found to have “deformities, bow legs and crookedness of the back”, all legacies of commencing work at too early an age. One of the worst pits was in nearby Brampton where boys of eight had to drag carts of coal along a tunnel only two feet high, working for twelve hours at a time without stretching their backs for fear of injury from falling coal. Owners said that “the pits would not pay worked any other way” and that boys had to begin so young because otherwise “they could not work these narrow seams, their limbs could not get used to it”.

Chesterfield women found work on the surrounding farms,
harvesting crops, winnowing corn, making hay, hoeing and weeding. They worked from daylight to dark, and had only the most basic tools — reaping hooks, scythes and hoes. The work was hard and, in bad weather, dirty and distressing. If temptation became too great and they, like young Phoebe Hill, stowed a little wheat, they faced a fine or, in some cases, transportation to Australia.

Of major importance in local Chesterfield life were the open-air markets, claimed to be among the largest in Britain, which served as both a livestock and a produce market. Drovers rested the cattle and sheep destined for the markets in fields near Newbold Road. In the markets, manorial rights were still exercised, causing much local dissatisfaction among farmers; it was not until 1842 that the Duke of Devonshire surrendered his right to take corn and cattle tolls. Chesterfield is in the heart of the "Dukeries": Devonshire House (the seat of the Duke of Devonshire), Bolsover Castle, Haddon Hall, Hardwick Hall and other mansions of the aristocracy are all nearby. The contrast between the luxurious lives of the dukes and the deprived lives of the common people was constantly visible. While men were being sentenced for stealing a loaf of bread to feed a starving family, the local paper described the lavish banquets of the Duke of Devonshire.

The New Poor Law Amendment Act, which infuriated the poor of the nation, led to the erection of the Workhouse of the Chesterfield Poor Law Union in 1839-40. A rather austere building, the workhouse could hold three hundred people, including children, many of whom were born there. The inmates were segregated according to sex and on the national census their occupations were frequently marked as "pauper". Dread of starvation and the workhouse was very real to poor families.

Wherever men, women and children toiled they suffered remorseless exploitation. But they were conditioned to believe they were inferior to their masters and that their way of life was meant to be. Not all people, however, remained passive under this oppression. A few began to resist, asking why one person should be a slave to another, and why the many should starve while the few rolled in luxuries. Voices began to be heard suggesting that there
would be no security or liberty until workers had some say in the laws they were called on to obey. By 1839, when Emma was born, the few had grown into a mass organisation. Bitter at the exclusion of the working class from the suffrage in the 1832 Reform Bill, and seeing the solution to the social and economic inequalities as a political one, these people drew up a People’s Charter with six points: it called for universal suffrage, annual parliaments, vote by ballot, abolition of property qualifications for members of parliament, equal electoral districts and payment of parliamentarians. They became known as the Chartists, and were to have a great impact on the lives of the working people.

At the time of Emma’s birth the Holmes family lived in Packers Row, Chesterfield where Daniel Holmes was a bootmaker (or cordonnier). She was baptised in the Chesterfield Elder Yard Unitarian Chapel on 28 July 1839.¹⁰

The industrial North and Midlands were the centre of Unitarianism, and Daniel’s family’s connection with the church could be traced back several generations. The Unitarians were not the most numerous of the non-conformist sects in the town, but the “intellectual qualifications and enlightened outlook of some of their leading members often gave them a relatively greater influence in the affairs of the town than their members warranted”.¹¹ (Even more important in Chesterfield were the Quakers — the Society of Friends — recognised as caring people, who gave a sedate flavour to the town.)

**Childhood and Chartism**

Soon after Emma’s birth, it became apparent that she had a cleft palate. Little could be done at the time to correct this condition, and it took great patience and very careful mothering to make sure that the baby Emma swallowed her food and survived. The condition always gave her voice a slight twang but did not appear to inhibit her in any way.

As she grew, Emma could enjoy a fairly carefree childhood. Along with other children, she could play in the green fields that surrounded Chesterfield, admiring or picking the delightful wild flowers — buttercups, daisies, penny moons, red poppies and the many other flowers that grew in profusion during spring.
Map of Chesterfield, showing streets where the Holmes family lived. The cobblestoned markets remain, due to public pressure, and the workhouse is now the Scarsdale Hospital.
spring and summer she could wander in the woods and gaze into the centre of bluebells or lie on her back, idly watching the changing patterns of the clouds. Undoubtedly, too, Emma looked at the local church, with its crooked spire dominating the skyline, and chanted the local rhyme:

Whichever way you turn your eye,
It always seem to be awry,
Pray, can you tell me the reason why?

and heard the fanciful and inspired explanations. It was said that the devil, angry at the sight of yet another church, kicked out and entangled his tail in the spire, and in his frantic struggle to free himself twisted the structure. It was also told that the spire, charmed by the sight of a beautiful and chaste bride, honoured her with a bow.

For fortunate children like Emma there would always be pleasant memories of childhood — wildflowers, meadows, birdsong and the scent of crushed leaves in the woods. Others, such as the colliery boys living their lives in the darkness of a coal mine and taking on the workload of miniature adults, could have few such happy memories.

Emma was not entirely divorced from the drab and deprived lives of those around her, for Chartism was one of the great influences on her young life. Daniel Holmes felt a strong identification with the movement — his father, Samuel, was a stocking weaver and the family had experienced long periods of unemployment and exploitation — and had become an active member. To many young men the six points of the Charter were so "many radiant fingerposts, pointing the people to a Land of Promise near at hand", they saw Chartism, not as a dry boring political campaign, but as a "living experience". It gave them hope; they lost the feeling of helplessness and together developed a new strength. More important, Daniel, as a Unitarian, believed that society, as well as the home, needed the active participation of women, and he encouraged the very young Emma to share his interest in Chartism. She could not avoid soaking up the atmosphere of the Chartists, animated as they were by intense feelings of both hope, and hostility to the governing class.

The Brampton and Chesterfield United Radical Association had
been formed in 1839. In April that year crowds and a band gathered at the entrance to Chesterfield to join a procession of women, children and men in working garb. Exhibiting such slogans as "The greatest happiness to the greatest number", and "Justice to all, Privilege to none", they marched to Ashgate Road, Little Brampton, gathering a crowd of two thousand on their way. There, speakers discussed the Charter and made it plain that they considered men with property to be incapable of representing them, as property "unfitted the possessor with sympathy for the labouring classes"; if the ruling class feared agitation, they had a simple solution: "Do away with the cause". The marchers called on people to come forward boldly and fearlessly until the Charter was the law of the land.

In later years, Emma often spoke of walking up to ten or twelve miles to Chartist meetings with her father. These "meetings" could have been the open-air rallies, often held on public holidays, to which contingents from outlying villages and towns marched, carrying banners and led by bands, to listen to speeches from local and national leaders. Public oratory was rich in the "denunciation of the tyrants" and proclamation of the "glories of freedom" and the air resounded with hearty cheers for their leaders and groans for their oppressors.

From the beginning there was a significant female interest in Chartism. When the Brampton and Chesterfield United Radical Association was formed in 1839, special mention had been made of the women present, and that it "augured well for the cause which thus enlisted sympathies of the women." At the same time, fifty women from the Brampton district formed their own group, the Chartist's Union, independently of the men.

The Chartists were awakening women's political consciousness, but their call for universal suffrage did not include female suffrage. Such a requirement, they claimed, would hold back the winning of manhood suffrage — this was to be a recurring argument everywhere as women fought for the right to vote. One Chartist, R.J. Richardson, who had written on the rights of women while in prison in 1839, did advocate votes for women, but only for "widows and maids". Thus he subscribed to the pre-
vailing attitude that wives and their husbands were one, or ought to be one. 18

Women Chartists urged other women not to leave politics to the menfolk. The Female Political Union of Newcastle-upon-Tyne wrote to their fellow countrywomen: "We have been told that the province of woman is her home, and that the field of politics should be left to men; this we deny... Is it not true that the interests of our fathers, husbands and brothers, ought to be ours? If they are oppressed and impoverished, do we not share those evils with them?" 19 The Manchester women, drawing attention to the fact that a queen held the highest position in the state, claimed, "We have the right to struggle to gain for ourselves, our husbands, brothers and children suitable houses, proper clothing and good food". 20 Women helped collect signatures for the Chartist national petitions presented to parliament in 1839, 1842 and 1848 and were often at the head of demonstrations; a few spoke at meetings and some served prison sentences. Mostly, though, their role was supportive, in keeping with their hymn:

Our little ones shall learn to bless
Their father of the union
And every mother shall caress
Her hero of the union. 21

They assisted men and women who were imprisoned for their political activities, and other people in need, and dealt as much as possible with shopkeepers who supported the People’s Charter.

By the 1840s, as unemployment grew and wages depreciated, particularly in the industrial north, up to one hundred women’s groups existed nationally, and whole communities were involved in Chartism. In the 1842 strikes and Plug riots aimed at restoring wage levels and procuring the People’s Charter, women, particularly in the textile industry where they made up the majority of the workforce, were considered to be the most militant. "A fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work" became their slogan. During these strikes, leaflets signed Friend of Bees and Enemy of Drones, were placed under doors in Chesterfield calling on people to "Strike for the Charter". 22 A rumour spread that the Chartists at a secret meeting at Brampton had decided to invade Chesterfield,
and the Duke of Devonshire mustered reinforcements as a protective measure. The news, however, proved incorrect.

The last great mass demonstration for the Charter occurred in 1848, stimulated by the stormy political agitation and revolution spreading throughout Europe. Once more local demonstrations developed and Chartists converged on London from areas all over the United Kingdom. From the radical industrial north, they travelled third class by train, amusing themselves by singing their Chartist hymns and the ‘Marseillaise’ ‘with more strength than harmony’. Thousands created a stir as they marched to Kennington Common bearing petitions reportedly signed by six million people. At the meeting Feargus O’Connor, the flamboyant Irish orator and Chartist leader, read out a letter of warning he had received: ‘Respected Sir, I can inform you that there will be an attempt on your life should you make your appearance on Monday. Take a friend’s warning — for God’s sake, do. Your true friend. A Chartist. P.S. Though a female, I glory in the name’. It was greeted with cheers.

During this, the Chartists final attempt to influence Parliament, the Chesterfield Town Council called on the Duke of Devonshire to convey its loyalty to Queen Victoria and its approval of the Whig Government’s actions against the Chartists. It was a further indication to the thousands of active Chartist supporters in the district that there was still an urgent need to fight for working people’s right to decide their own destiny. Daniel Holmes often expressed regret that he would not live to see the six points of the Charter achieved, but in the young Emma he saw the possibility of a new generation achieving justice in the better world for which he had so passionately agitated.

Emma used to speak with pride of Daniel Holmes’s active role in the final demonstration. The mass support engendered by Chartism and its development of a working-class sense of identification, a heightening of class awareness, impressed the young Emma, who retained a staunch working-class standpoint in all her later political activities.

There were no immediate gains from these turbulent years of mass activity, but the Chartists did not feel that they had failed.
Nor had they; rather they had pioneered the many great movements that were to follow.

During the time the Chartists were active, several commissions of inquiry were held into the working conditions of men, women and children. The 1842 Commission found little support for legislation to prevent very young children from working in the mines, in spite of mothers' continual fear that accidents would kill or scar them. Their poverty was such that they could not afford to consider their children's future welfare. As Ann Birkin, the mother of two young miners, explained, "If they were not allowed to work so young, as a widow, I could not maintain them." Revelation of the severe physical conditions in which women and children worked in the mines awoke the public conscience. The Chartists expressed anger at the indifference of the wealthy women who, they said, "breathe no sign of pity, speak no word of sorrow, nor ask their husbands and fathers why are these poor collier women so abused, degraded and enslaved by their country's laws". The fact that men, women and children worked in near nakedness to overcome the heat of the mines horrified the Victorians — but only because they feared that such displays of sex would present a moral danger to women and children. In 1842 legislation was passed prohibiting women, and girls and boys under ten from working underground. In banning their work rather than improving their conditions, however, the reformers, failed to consider the consequences. Without alternative employment, it meant destitution for widows and many families.

The commission found that in all areas of employment conditions were detrimental to the health and well-being of the workers. The lace makers of Chesterfield and Nottingham, suffered from short-sightedness, curvature of the spine from sitting bent over their work hour after weary hour, growth check, consumption and derangement of uterine function. Potteries at Brampton, like the mines, led to undersized children, a child of thirteen there being equivalent to a ten or eleven-year-old in other areas. This was attributed to the early age at which children commenced work, the heavy loads beyond their strength that they had to carry, and their exhausting, over-heated work conditions.

The commissioners expressed concern that girls who had re-
ceived little or no education were sent to work while mere children: all their habits were formed in the workshops, which became a substitute for home. They were also critical of women workers' inability to maintain a home adequately because they lacked early training. This type of criticism was not unusual. Women had the difficult task of maintaining their families against the odds of poverty and disease and the continual fear of want hung over their heads. Few could save anything to put aside for a rainy day, yet they were insulted by those who had never known deprivation, and urged to practise thrift. A doctor in the Derbysire Courier, advising on the prevention of disease, suggested that families should avoid poor diet, wet and insufficient clothing, crowding in houses and damp rooms — good advice, but impossible for the deprived poor to follow.  

By 1851 Emma, now eleven, had been joined by two sisters — Ann, six, and Mary Elizabeth, three — and a newly born brother, Ernest Charles. Martha quite possibly had other pregnancies, but infant mortality was high: in the death registers of the nineteenth century page after page lists the deaths of children aged one year and under. Though it was customary at the time to list women's employment on the census form — for example as "wife of a coal miner" or "miller's wife" — no such title appears on the 1851 census beside Martha Holmes' name. Yet it is obvious that she would have assisted Daniel in many aspects of his trade. Emma and her sisters would also have helped by running errands and performing other tasks. The family was now living at Saltergate, recorded as far back as 1285 as meaning "Salters Road", an ancient route into Chesterfield. During the nineteenth century it seems to have been a mainly residential area.  

In the 1840s, only half the adult females in the country were literate and two-thirds of the adult males. Martha Holmes appears to have been one of the illiterate ones, since Emma's birth certificate has a cross as her mother's mark, instead of a signature. The system that exploited workers did not require them to be educated. In fact the "influential classes of society" believed that it would "endanger existing institutions" if the manufacturing population were taught more than reading, because with too much edu-
cation they might try to rise above their station. Children learnt in some instances from their parents, relations or friends, or for a few pence could attend a dame school, run by women who taught habits of neatness along with reading and other essentials.

Charles Shaw in *When I Was a Child* tells how his education came from two sources — Old Betty’s school and Sunday school. Old Betty taught girls and boys reading and, once they could read, to knit stockings. Later she taught them spelling, and reading the Bible. As a reward, good students were allowed to sit on the top stair or take the ashes from the grate to the ash heap.*

Because it was widely believed that crime and disorderly conduct among the “lower orders” was due to a lack of religious influence and an inability to read the Bible, Sunday schools were opened up in the mining and industrial districts. But teaching in these schools was often inefficient and those who attended learnt little. Of Sarah Rowlands, who worked in the potteries at Brampton, the 1842 commissioners said: “[She] does not know how old she is, she has worked a year, was at a day school for a year, now goes to the church Sunday-School; reads the Testament, but is not taught to spell; cannot spell either of her names”. Sunday schools were also judged unsuitable for most collier boys because “when the boys have been beaten, knocked about and covered with sludge all week, they want to be in bed all day to rest on Sunday”.*

Children in the Union Workhouse in Chesterfield were more fortunate than many other children since they received three hours’ education each day. The Workhouse annual report in 1848 drew attention, however, to the resignation of the schoolmistress who had been criticised by the inspector because she lacked proficiency in Hebrew, Latin and mathematics. The Workhouse guardians opposed the suggestion that the children should be taught such subjects, saying it would be unjust to the ratepayers: they would have to give their hard-earned pittance “to be expended on the accomplishments of pauper children” when they could not afford to pay a “common dame in a country village for a miserably scanty education of their own children”.*

A few years before Emma was born, the Unitarian Chapel in Chesterfield had added two school rooms to its building, and it
was here that she learnt to read, spell and write. Her broader education, however, came from her parents. Chartist parents instilled radical ideas in their children and told them of the people's struggles against oppression. They paid special attention to commemorating the anniversaries of the Peterloo massacre and the birthday of the revolutionary Thomas Paine. The children heard how women and men had peacefully assembled at St Peter's Fields, Manchester, in 1819 to campaign for reform, and were set upon by the yeomanry with swords — eleven, including two women and one child, were killed and more than four hundred wounded. Twenty years later Chartist banners proclaimed “Remember the Bloody Deeds of Peterloo”. Chartist children also became familiar with extracts from the works of Thomas Paine, and Emma was to live her life by a creed from his book, *The Rights of Man* — “The world is my country; to do good is my religion.” She later passed this creed on to her children and friends. In some areas Chartist women had organised schools, to counteract the National Schools' policy of teaching children to show deference to their so-called superiors “when we are all the same flesh and blood”. Though it seems Emma did not have the benefit of attending one of them, her later history suggests that her father did not neglect this aspect of her education. Long after Chartism died, Daniel Holmes taught his children to question society and not to accept oppressive conditions. He kept alive the vision of the Chartists and his influence created of the young Emma a fiery rebel who fought against the existing social order — throughout her life she delighted in being called a rebel.

While economic necessity was forcing some women to work long, exhausting hours, wealthy women were considered too weak and delicate to lift a finger and flaunted their wealth by the jewellery and fashionable clothes they wore. In Victorian times, the term “women” denoted the working class and “ladies” the upper and middle classes. The rich nobility lived on their country estates and moved to London during the season to attend lavish balls and receptions, while the emerging middle class achieved an air of wealth and extravagance by riding in carriages and having servants attend their every need. “Ladies” who accepted their wealth and comfort as right and proper angered the young Emma,
Reynolds's Political Instructor, 15 December 1849. Looked on with horror by the ruling class, it was banned in military barracks in England.

particularly as their privileged position was gained at the expense of the slum dwellers and workers, who frequently lacked the necessities of life.

To keep wealthy women in a state of idleness required a large army of servants, and domestic service was the largest area of employment for women and girls. Many had to walk a few paces behind their employers in the street, and to contrive to be neither seen nor heard at home. With a good employer, however, a domestic was usually better off than were her sisters in the mills; at
least she had regular meals and a bed. A popular Music Hall song of Victorian times reflects the servant’s life:

Won’t nobody employ me as a servant
A nussmaid, or somelfink of that kind.
I ain’t a hearty eater, and the bits what’s left will do,
And I’ll sleep upon the floor and never mind.

Throughout her life Emma was to concern herself with the plight of domestics, and also to retain an antagonistic, uncompromising attitude to upper and middle-class women and royalty. To her, they were the enemy.

Of course not all middle-class women accepted their prescribed role, or that their education should consist only of those skills required to catch a husband or run his household. Though schooling was considered bad for girls’ brains, making them unladylike and too strong minded, in Emma’s time individual women, through their achievement, inspired others. Mary Somerville, one of the most remarkable women of her time, excelled in mathematics and science; Harriet Martineau became a pioneer in social sciences; Elizabeth Garrett (Anderson) fought male opposition and ridicule to become Britain’s first female doctor. For their pains, however, they led very lonely lives in the hostile world of men, accused of being a threat to family life and of desexing themselves. Other women kept an eye on their behaviour. Caroline Fox, a young Quaker, after hearing a lecture by Clara Balfour on the theme *The Female Influence*, wrote in her diary, “There was nothing to annoy by its assumptions for our sex; and even in the perilous art of lecturing the lady did not unsex herself.” 

Daughters of Quaker and Unitarian families were encouraged to join in public debate and given a sense of equality, but they were not typical of middle-class families. Most agreed with Queen Victoria, who referred to women’s bid for equality as a mad, wicked folly.

Florence Nightingale, who received national recognition for her disciplined nursing at the Crimean War and for later founding a school for nursing, lived at Lea Hurst, a short distance from Chesterfield. But it was for other things that Emma remembered the Crimean War. She felt compassion for the returned soldiers she saw in the streets, selling matches and bootlaces in order to survive. Their usefulness to a callous government was over; it no
longer cared about them. She could never get the sight of them out of her mind. The deep feelings for humanity they stirred in her caused her to become a staunch antimilitarist. She was only fifteen then, but sixty years later she was to use a popular song of the times with effect when opposing the First World War.

If I were Queen of France,  
Or better still the Pope of Rome,  
There'd be no fighting men abroad,  
No weeping maids at home.  
All the world would be at peace,  
And if kings must show their might,  
Let those who make the quarrel  
Be the only ones to fight.38

Marriage and Manchester

Emma’s children always believed that she eloped at the age of sixteen. Records show, however, that she married Jabez Mycroft Silcock, the bookkeeper son of a collieme engine tenter of Brampton39 at the Chesterfield Register Office on 15 September 1857. Emma was then nineteen. Jabez had two sisters who, with his parents, spoiled and indulged him. He had had a university education and was considered a brilliant Latin and Greek scholar. Their son, Thomas Mycroft,40 was born on 12 December 1857, and at the time of the 1861 census, the family was living at Bank Yard, Low Pavement. At that time Chesterfield had “dwellings that appeared to have dropped carelessly along the gentle acclivity — streets, back alleys and confined yards crying aloud for more space, better sanitation and living conditions”41. Many of these dwellings were located near stables and other workplaces. One area, referred to as the “dog kennels”, comprised narrow lanes of hovels considered unfit for habitation. These dwellings contrasted with the “more recent neat, clean and airy present day mansions smiling in their trim gardens”.42

The census also showed Emma’s father as employing three men. Emma and her sister Mary Elizabeth, now thirteen, were both listed as shoebinders and Ernest, ten, as a bootcloser. Perhaps the “three men” Daniel employed were his children.

By 1864 Emma had given birth to two more children: Mary Elizabeth (nicknamed “Polly” and named after Emma’s sister) was
born in 1861 and Catherine (Kate) in 1865. Catherine’s birth registration gives the family’s address as New Road, Brampton. Not long after her birth, Emma and Jabez moved to Manchester where Jabez obtained work as a clerk in a shipping office. They eventually settled in Salford, at 41 James Henry Street, where their second son, George, was born in 1867. As is customary in the north, Emma fondly referred to her children as “My George” and “My Polly”.

Mechanisation of the new textile industry had changed Salford and Manchester from pleasant market towns to industrial centres. People who had previously worked from their homes or on local farms were now condemned to an urban life dominated by mean little streets of naked, sprawling ugliness, unadorned with trees, grass or flowers. Now cotton had become Manchester’s central force and the “humming, beating and whirring” of numerous looms filled factories with noise like the “roaring of the sea”.

It was this continual noise — not only of the looms, but also of furnaces and the whistle of steam — together with the grey smoke clouds and vast structures of the factories that first shocked Emma. Some factories rose six storeys high, shutting out air and light from the workers’ dwellings. Emma was concerned at the poor sanitation linked with the bad housing: there were open sewers and ditches, and refuse littered the streets, leading to frequent cholera outbreaks.

Emma had been aware that similar problems existed in Chesterfield, but in the large industrial town the harsh conditions were magnified to a formidable degree. Salford’s population was more than six times that of Chesterfield; its environment was damp, bleak, dreary and depressing, and the family felt hemmed in after the more open space of their home town. She knew that the squalor and degradation of the environment were as unpalatable to the populace as were the scandalous working conditions. The gentry, meanwhile, were able to move away from the unhealthy congestion to country estates, and the wealthy people who remained planted lawns and gardens and surrounded their land with high walls.

As Manchester and Salford were the centre of the industrialisation that was to make England the workshop of the world, there
was an influx of visitors, some to spy on the technically advanced machinery, others to observe the resultant social and environmental problems. The novels of Charles Dickens reflect this depressing image of nineteenth century England in human terms, while Engels and Marx developed their political theories from observations in Manchester. Queen Victoria also visited Manchester and later remarked that the local people she had seen from her coach seemed “a very intelligent but painfully unhealthy-looking population”.

Emma felt compassion for the continual parade of homeless children she saw in the streets, living on scraps and sleeping in doorways. Industrial towns, with their lack of open spaces, were unhappy places for children, robbed of healthy exercise and unable to escape the polluted atmosphere. Space meant profits, and mills and houses were crammed onto every available piece of ground, with no thought for the quality of life of workers’ families. Each morning she heard the workers being awakened by the watchman who began knocking on windows before 5 a.m. so that even the last people awakened would have time to get ready before the factory whistles summoned them to work at 6 a.m. When the whistle screeched, the streets came alive with the bustle of workers, the girls in coarse cotton frocks, loose jackets and colourful scarves, with large shawls arranged around their heads and clogs on their feet, and the men in blue striped shirts and coarse twill trousers and jackets. At 8.30 a.m. the machines stopped and once more the empty streets echoed to the tramp of feet as the workers hurried to their nearby homes for a light breakfast. At 9 a.m. the whistles summoned them back to their toil.

Wages in the factories and mills were low, and employers reduced them even further by instituting fines for such misdemeanours as whistling, leaving the window open, or having a little waste on the spindle. A spinner failing to provide a satisfactory replacement when sick received an even heavier fine. Alongside the rapid industrial development of Salford and Manchester grew militancy. The area was strong in radical movements which either originated there, or were the strongest branches of national organisations. Workers could clearly see that though they created the owners’ wealth they got little in return but abuse, low wages
and poor conditions. They knew that if the master stayed home
the machines continued working, while if the workers were ab­
sent the whole factory closed down. Strike action therefore be­
came a powerful weapon in their efforts to win their economic
 demands.

Late Saturday night was the happiest time for working people;
then, it seemed, all working Manchester and Salford collected in
the streets. The laughter of mill girls calling out to their friends
might have seemed rather raucous to middle-class ears, but it was
fun to the girls. The markets were a favourite meeting place, the
Flat Iron Market of Salford being universally known as a scene of
lively bargaining and enjoyment. Women gathered round the sec­
ond-hand clothes stall looking for garments that could be worn or
cut down for their families. There was dancing, music and sing­
ing, and street musicians, street traders such as knife grinders, and
pavement artists all added to the life and atmosphere of the
streets. When in 1870 the free library opened in Salford, it too be­
came an important part of their lives. Emma was an avid reader
and regularly went there to read Reynolds's Newspaper which
kept her in touch with radical politics. On Sundays, though, the
workers' day off, everything closed. There were even church
bans on the playing of marbles and readers complained in the Sal­
ford press about crumpets, watercress and onions being sold in
the streets on the Sabbath.

It was in the public house that the working man became his
own master. Beer houses in Salford remained open until 4 a.m. Al­
cohol brought a temporary amnesia for workers in the textile in­
dustry, but it had become a national problem. Women had to
cope with depleted wages to feed their husbands' addiction, and
for the children it could mean continual hunger and being dressed
in rags. Many Chartist women later became involved in temper­
ance causes, not so much on moral grounds as for simple survival.

The average yearly death rate in Manchester at the time was
higher than the English average, with deaths due mainly to epi­
demics and industrial accidents. As well, the constant presence of
lint particles in factories caused chronic chest diseases, which the
damp, polluted atmosphere aggravated still further. Jabez, like
many others, suffered from tuberculosis and he died on 1 June
1870, aged thirty-seven. Emma managed to give him a respectable funeral — something very important to working people who feared burial in a pauper’s grave. The youngest children, George (three) and Kate (six), too young to realise fully that their father was dead, were very impressed by the funeral, with its coaches, and horses with bouncing, black plumes. They particularly liked the drivers of the coaches, resplendent in their tall black shiny hats, with long whips topped with black ribbon, who seemed like characters from another world. They were so excited by the spectacle that they wanted to know when Emma was going to die so that they could ride in the coach again.  

Left a widow with four young children to support and with no social welfare, Emma sought work as a seamstress. Tom, now thirteen, brought in a few pennies working as an errand boy. Salford was a close-knit community where people were caring and neighbourly, so Emma probably received support from those around her, as she did from her parents who moved to Manchester to live with her. Her father was still carrying on his trade of shoemaker and Martha, now fifty-two, was, in the 1871 census, recorded for the first time as a shoebinder — a position she had probably held since her marriage. In this census Emma’s parents appear as Daniel and Martha Hickman, and Martha’s birthplace is given as Buxton instead of Somercotes as in other censuses. Nineteenth century censuses were often inaccurate, however, so it was almost certainly merely an unfortunate error. 

Emma’s own occupation is given as “gentleman’s white shirt maker”, a trade she learnt in Manchester and at which she worked twelve hours a day, six days a week. Her training covered all aspects of the trade, which was to prove a great advantage to her later in Queensland. Emma had natural ability and learnt quickly, so the continual exhaustion she suffered was offset by the pride she felt in her obvious skill. There was a certain sense of achievement in seeing the completed garment, a feeling she hadn’t experienced in her previous occupation of shoebinder. Nevertheless, she was very aware that she was being exploited, as were others in her trade. The superior attitudes of those for whom she measured and sewed, who considered themselves a class above a mere seamstress, engendered a deep and lasting anger in her.
Sewing Machine Work in Manchester.

The condition of sewing machine workers is the subject of a very interesting correspondence in the "Manchester Guardian." We reprint the letter signed "A Sewing Machine Girl," by which the correspondence was opened, and also give extracts from other letters. We are glad to find that the Manchester machinists are becoming aware of the urgent need of union in their trade. Some startling revelations of inadequate payments and other difficulties have been made to us by members of the Society formed by the London Machinists at the meeting reported in the March number of the Journal. We are told, for instance, that from 10d. to 1s. 4d. are prices commonly paid for machining throughout one of the Holland costumes sold at from 12s. to 14s. Bad as matters are in London, however, it appears that in some Northern towns there are still lower depths. London machinists are frequently told, as an excuse for a reduction of payment, that the work can be done at a lower rate in Manchester, and it is therefore obvious, that Union among the machinists of that place and of other provincial towns would greatly strengthen the London Union. One of the Correspondents of the "Manchester Guardian" is in communication with the Committee of the League, who have gladly promised to give the fullest assistance in their power in efforts to bring about this very desirable extension of the Women's Union movement.

All Letters or Articles intended for insertion in the Journal should be sent not later than the 10th of each month to the Editor, at the Office of the League.

SEWING MACHINE WORKERS.

To the Editor of the Manchester Guardian.

(Sir April 10.)

Sir,—I wish you would allow me to ask the sewing machine girls and women of the United Kingdom to try and gather themselves together into some sort of an organization for mutual protection against the heavy oppressions under which they labour. The miserable tyranny with which we are tortured is vividly described in Hood's immortal "Song of the Shirt," only it is doubly in-

Women's Union Journal, April 1876 (Courtesy Fawcett Library, City of London Polytechnic)
The sewing machine, at first hailed as a wondrous means of lightening women's workload, had actually brought greater exploitation of the workers, aided by the introduction of the hire-purchase system. As the Women's Union Journal was to say in April 1876, "The day of the isolated needlewoman has passed, or is rapidly passing away, but new evils have grown up around the isolated sewing machines". These women were at the mercy of middlemen who gained contracts from large shops by underselling their competitors. They then ensured their own profit by reducing even further the rates they paid to their outworkers. To achieve a living wage, the women had to work far into the night stitching by candlelight. The unhappy lot of these women is captured in Thomas Hood's "The Song of the Shirt''.

Work — Work — Work
Till the brain begins to swim:
Work — Work — Work
Till the eyes are heavy and dim!
Seam, and gusset, and band.
Band, and gusset and seam.
Till over the buttons I fall asleep,
And sew them on in a dream!

In spite of their exploitation, however, needlewomen were regarded as a cut above factory girls — the middle and upper classes found the camaraderie and independent spirit these girls had developed rather coarse and vulgar.

Still influenced by the spirit of the Chartists, some workers continued to fight against their low status and conditions, and in the 1860s the trade unions reorganised. Union membership, though, was restricted to males. Men saw women's entry into the workforce on low wages as a threat to their own livelihoods, and in the 1840s, when agitating for a ten-hour day, the unions had included a demand that women be withdrawn from factories. Although women had supported miners' struggles over many years, they were not welcomed into the men's activities. In a bid to win new recruits in 1873, the South Yorkshire Miners' Association appealed to the miners' love of social gatherings and demonstrations, by holding annual marches. Attitudes to women's participation were evident in the instructions issued for the Chesterfield procession: "Keep the females out of the procession."
Male tailors also objected to women entering their male-dominated trade.

Women workers, then, were welcome neither in the trade unions nor in the workforce. There was only one solution — form their own unions. In 1874, another Emma, Emma Paterson, formed the Women’s Protective and Provident League in London, to be run initially by those with “more leisure and business knowledge than working women”;\(^1\)\(^5\) middle-class members therefore predominated. The league formed unions in different trades, provided benefits for the unemployed or sick, registered employment available and gathered information on employers’ wage rates. It also produced its own journal.

Concerned that employers in London frequently justified pay reductions to local machinists by claiming that rates were lower in Manchester, the League set out to unionise the Manchester machinists. Prior to the first meeting a letter signed “A Sewing Machine Girl” appeared in the local paper. It referred to the miserable tyranny with which they were “tortured” and continued:

\[\text{We are compelled to get to our work by a certain time every morning, only to find in many cases that the door is locked, and then we have to stand shivering in the cold or wet until the one in authority arrives . . . we are not told when work will be ready . . . but must wait and wait until one’s very heart grows sick at the work deferred, the small amount earned, the long weary tramps one has to take to reach it, and the many little jobs that have to be neglected in order to obtain this much-waited-for work . . . It is not the fingers only that are “weary and worn” in our business; it is the feet, the legs, the body, arms, hands, fingers, and head. All have to be actively and incessantly employed while manipulating such a delicate instrument as a sewing machine . . . Surely it is high time for some one to take us in hand, organise us, and drill us into some kind of a "union" . . .}^5\]

Emma, too, must have felt the weariness she describes.

A Machinist’s Union was formed in Manchester in 1876 with a membership of 260; but within a year it was disbanded for lack of support. Their housework, combined with their long exhausting hours of work, made it difficult for women to remain active unionists. There are no records to establish that Emma was a member of a union but her subsequent history suggests that she would have been at least interested, if not involved.
Another movement with which Emma was later involved — the women's suffrage movement — also developed momentum while Emma was living in Salford. The first leaflet on women's suffrage, distributed in 1847, is attributed to Ann Knight, a Quaker supporter of Chartism, and the Sheffield Chartist women had formed themselves into a suffrage organisation in 1851; but it was not until 1868 that Manchester was to have its first group. At what is thought to have been the first public meeting addressed by women only, the Manchester Society for Women's Suffrage was formed. At a meeting at the Free Trade Hall, the society formulated a policy aimed at securing voting rights for women "on the same conditions as was, or might be granted to men". In enumerating the reasons for women's suffrage, the National Association of Women's Suffrage had stated that the 1867 Reform Bill in its "recent extension of the franchise to a class of men often ignorant as well as poor, makes the denial of it more galling to educated and tax paying women". This middle-class approach would hardly have attracted Emma, with her working-class ideology.

The concept of two separate spheres — women in the home, and men, the breadwinners, out in the community deciding the future of the world — became more pronounced during the nineteenth century, and many women found it distasteful. Emma, with her Unitarian and Chartist upbringing, was particularly opposed to it, and devoted her entire life to the interests of humanity and the fight for women's equality.

Self-help through friendly societies, cooperatives and chapel was a feature of workers' lives by this time. Chapel tended to dominate the lives of working people, Wesley Methodism having a special appeal because the sermons were preached by fellow workers in a language they understood. A group that attracted Emma, however, was the Secularists, with their Freethought Association. Secularists (also called "freethinkers") were the forerunners of the Rationalists and Humanists and were sceptical about religion which, they believed, held back the advancement of working people's welfare. They enjoyed an easy relationship with the Unitarians who believed in a rational approach to all things, and many Unitarians retained membership of both or-
ganisations. Asked if she were a Unitarian, Emma once replied, "I may be, but I know I am a Humanitarian". The century-old writings of Thomas Paine were the model on which the Secularists shaped their beliefs, and the slogan, "The world is my country: to do good is my religion" (internationalism and humanitarianism) became further integrated into the pattern of Emma's life. The Freethought Association did not attract many women, but one of its most gifted and talented speakers was Annie Besant, of London, who was later to become internationally known as the leader of the match girls' strike. A book on birth control by Besant and Charles Bradlaugh was widely distributed by the Secularists, who believed that the large families of the poor further impoverished them. This earned them a jail sentence, but it was overturned on appeal. Annie, like Emma, had the courage to question religion at a time when people were deeply religious or at least claimed to be.

Attitudes to such questions were governed by class. The feminist campaign of middle-class women, which centred on the Married Women's Property Act, didn't stir working-class women who owned no property, although the hard-earned wages were legally not hers, but her husband's. Indeed, the women's Chartist group in East London forbade lectures on marriage laws or religion without the invitation of a majority of members. Equally, the campaign for the right to train and work in professional "men only" jobs did not gain the enthusiastic support of working women, economically forced as they were into menial and oppressive jobs; they saw their emancipation as coming from better working conditions. (A few voices were raised for equal pay but many women feared that it would mean loss of their jobs.) Most married women in fact longed for the day they wouldn't go out to work: to them leisure time was an impossible dream, and to work only in their homes was their idea of emancipation. The idea of a non-working wife might have appealed to the elite of the workers, but for low-wage families a non-working wife meant less food on the table or clothes on their backs.
On 30 August 1874, after four years of widowhood, Emma married William Calderwood, a 32-year-old widower and stonemason, at Salford Register Office, with her father, Daniel Holmes, and her married sister, Mary Elizabeth Chapman, as witnesses. The Calderwoods, lived at 5 South Street and West Worsley Street, Salford.¹

Letters from immigrants to the United States, Canada and Australia regularly appeared in newspapers at this time, praising the freer life and improved conditions they were experiencing. As well, there were continual advertisements enticing British workers to emigrate. Emma was well-aware of the new life opening up in the colonies, where people could make a fresh start and could pioneer not only the land but also the political and social system, and read with interest any news about Australia — its climate, people and opportunities.

When the gold rushes caused labour shortages in Australia, the Government, through the Immigration Act of 1869, offered free grants of land as an inducement to emigrants. It also offered assistance with passages, including free passages for domestics, who were in demand. Australia was widely advertised as a “working man’s Paradise”, evoking a picture of untold wealth, rich fertile soil, and gold and sapphires just waiting to be picked up. Many British workers took advantages of these assisted passages, convinced that they could better themselves and make a new life, and parents often followed their children out after hearing of the more favourable conditions.

It was health considerations, however, that caused Emma and
her husband to emigrate. William Calderwood's lungs had been seriously affected by the dust from his work as a stonemason, and he had contracted phthisis, a type of tuberculosis. Believing that Queensland's sunshine would be his salvation, the family decided to emigrate to Brisbane.

Their decision created a sad disquiet among both family and friends, who considered such a long voyage foolhardy and full of danger, as well as making their absence more permanent. Emma and her children had made several moves over the years, unlike many of the emigrants who had never travelled more than a few miles from their villages; nevertheless the decision required much courage.

On 14 November 1878, a typically damp, bleak day, the family set out on their first sea voyage, part of a contingent of 399 emigrants who boarded the barque *Selkirkshire*, which also carried a large cargo of whisky and wine, pig iron, and eight crates of earthenware. Emigrants had been warned that the amount of free luggage allowed was limited and that they should not take heavy furniture or rough common tools. They were also advised to pack all their clothes, whether old or new, but not to lay in a large stock of heavy clothing.

The Calderwoods packed many of their belongings in a big wooden box which, together with a large oil painting of Emma's Aunt Bess, remained in the family for many years. Obviously the painting had sentimental significance for Emma, but its sombre colours and forbidding expression tended to frighten children. The eyes particularly, with their dark brooding Mediterranean look, appeared to watch them disapprovingly.

The Calderwoods were assisted passengers and appear on the passenger list as "Calderwood, William 37, Emma 36; Silcock, George 11, Silcock, Mary 17 and Silcock, Kate 14".³ From the time they arrived in Brisbane, however, the younger children, Kate and George, were known as Calderwood, and George always recognised William Calderwood as his father. Emma's eldest son, Tom, did not travel with them but followed the next year.

They arrived in Queensland on 2 March, but remained at Cape Moreton on Moreton Island until the following morning. While they were anchored at Cape Moreton, a boatload of French con-
victs escaping from Noumea dropped anchor nearby. As they sailed up the Brisbane River the next day, the passengers lined the decks to look at this strange new land of which they had such great expectations. The Calderwoods, with memories of congested Salford, were struck by the space, the expanse of the landscape. Along the Brisbane River that twisted like a silver thread, they saw cultivated areas here and there and glimpsed houses between the bush, with its unfamiliar trees and vegetation. Sailing barges and log rafts were among the usual everyday traffic on the river, with the big red churning stern wheels of the steamboats adding vibrancy to the scene.

At first everything seemed strange, and so unlike England: the harsh light, the shimmering haze on iron roofs, the eternal glare and the dust were all unexpected, and the skies, when clear, were so beautifully blue. Booklets offering advice to emigrants had suggested they attempt to arrive between April and July, giving them time to become acclimatised before the hot months. Assisted passengers, though, had no say in their sailing date, so the Calderwoods were thrust into the worst part of the Queensland summer. The heat and humidity of March sapped their energy and soaked with sweat the unsuitable clothes that marked them as “new chums”. Heavy rain fell throughout the colony during the week of their arrival, and the continual damp and the muddy, unmade roads covered with puddles of water kept their feet continually wet. Even in the city centre Brisbane’s gaslit streets were unsealed, and had they bought a newspaper on the day of their arrival they might have read the following advertisement: Wanted an ALDERMAN to live at the George Street end of Charlotte Street during muddy weather.

Not long after Emma and her family moved into a rented house at Kangaroo Point, they experienced their first thunderstorm. The suddenness of it; the appearance of thick, black ominous clouds from clear azure skies; the rise in the wind; the frightening thunderclaps and lightening flashes; the deafening din of heavy raindrops on the galvanised iron roof: all were beyond their experience. They were terrified, convinced the roof was falling in. Home alone with the children, Emma ushered them under the bed and crawled in after them.
The luxurious subtropical vegetation appealed to the Calderwoods, and they were gradually introduced to such strange fruits as mangoes, bananas, passionfruit and pineapples. Their first encounter, though, was with tomatoes. Seeing them for the first time, the children thought they were a rather large and red variety of plum. But as their teeth sank into the flesh, they shuddered at the unexpected taste — they had anticipated sweetness, but this was tart. They spat it out and raced to their parents, angrily declaring, "Mum, these plums are poisoned!"

The wave of immigrants in the 1870s came mainly from England, Ireland and Scotland, although ships also brought people from Germany and Scandinavia. When the Calderwoods strolled through Brisbane’s streets, they were aware too, of other races, such as the Chinese who had originally been attracted to the goldfields but were now working as cabinet makers and market gardeners. There were Melanesians, victims of the slave trade, who had been brought to Queensland to work on northern sugar plantations and now worked in Brisbane as servants for the wealthy; and Aborigines who, through the encroachment of urban development, had been forced into fringe camps of ti-tree gunyahs on the outskirts of the city, at Enoggera, Alderley and Sandgate.

At the junction of Albert Street and Wickham Terrace, Emma and her family would have seen the iron and tin shanties in which veterans of the Sudan and Crimean wars lived and, next to the General Post Office, the low whitewashed building housing the police station where there was "an interesting crowd always hanging about". Perhaps they also saw little boys in the streets using sticks of sugarcane several feet long as walking sticks and chewing the top end.

Also indicative of the lifestyle of the era is the variety of items left unclaimed at the Lost Property Office in 1888 — a cork hat, a cabbage-tree hat, a parasol, a walking stick, a saddle, a tin of kerosene (leaking), a bag of corn, a swag and an empty butter keg.

Brisbane was like a sprawling country town compared with the industrial cities of Manchester and Salford. Queensland had been independent from New South Wales only since 1859, and Brisbane was still in the initial stages of growth. The streets were alive, bustling with horse-drawn drays, sulkies and spring carts.
Sometimes a bullocky, using colourful language would urge his team of bullocks through the streets, and cows grazed near the city.

Horses were the main form of transport on land, whether for the individual, for the public or for goods. Those who didn't own a horse walked, travelled on the buses drawn by three or four horses and carrying up to twenty passengers, or took one of the horsedrawn taxis lined up in Queen Street. People were also ferried across the Brisbane River in rowing boats. The river, which was then described as sparkling blue and teeming with fish, was lined with wharves, shipping offices and warehouses from Petrie's Bight (now Petrie Bight) to the Gardens Reach. There were public baths at Spring Hill and at the bottom of Edward Street, but people in the suburbs swam in the numerous creeks and waterholes of outlying areas. George Calderwood learnt to swim in the Brisbane River at Kangaroo Point.

Cobb & Co dominated coach travel for longer distances, departing from Eagle Street, near where the fountain stands. A bugle call and the driver's shout of “All aboard” signalled the departure of the coach as it set off down Queen Street, its roof piled high with bags of mail, often with men perched on top.

The majority of people lived close to the city centre. The streets surrounding Queen Street, the commercial hub, were lined mainly with houses, some with latticed verandahs protected by passionfruit vines. Here and there were banana trees. The area from Elizabeth Street to the Botanic Gardens and bordered by Albert and Edward Streets was known locally as Frogs’ Hollow. It was the principal industrial area of the city, with workshops, a brewery, grog shanties and numerous boarding houses (all run by women) and ten hotels. As its name indicates, Frogs’ Hollow was a low-lying area, and many of the workshops were below street level. It was mainly inhabited by workers’ families and ethnic groups including German Jews and Chinese, with Chinese gambling dens providing games of fantan for local gamblers. The area was both then and later, associated with prostitution.

Those who had made their wealth from gold or the pastoral industry built their elegant homes on the heights of Hamilton, Albion, Clayfield and Highgate Hill, or moved to estates on the city
outskirts. Working people lived mainly in low-lying areas — Fortitude Valley, New Farm, Kangaroo Point and South Brisbane — or clustered in the gullies around Spring Hill. Some terraced houses were built in the city area, but the majority of homes were two-room timber houses with a front verandah, quite unlike the two-up-two-down brick homes to which Emma was accustomed.

The Calderwoods stayed at Kangaroo Point for only a short while, then moved to a house in Waterworks Road, Red Hill. Waterworks Road was then little more than a bush track, and Chinese market gardens lined Ithaca Creek. A Queensland style of worker’s cottage was emerging. Built of timber and raised on high stumps to deter termites and create coolness, it had four rooms divided by a hallway, and a veranda where most family life took place.

The family found the heat and humidity trying, as were the mosquitoes, cockroaches and flies. Another problem, common in a subtropical climate, was weevils in the flour. They also had difficulty adjusting to the lack of clearly defined seasons. Cooking on a wood stove — some people had only an open hearth — could be a boon in winter, but Emma found it only added to the stifling discomfort of the Queensland summer. The woodheap was an essential part of every backyard. Saucepans became blackened with soot and were difficult to clean and grubby to handle, as was the stove which had to be blackened with polish and burnished until the black iron gleamed.

Monday was still washing day. Only a wisp of a woman, Emma must have found it difficult to lift heavy washing from the steaming sudsy water in the outdoor, wood-fired copper and then rinse it in galvanised tubs, filled and emptied by hand. (Enthusiastic gardeners emptied the rinsing water over the garden.) Finally, clothes were blued, often starched, and handwrung. Only the wealthy few had a maid to squeeze the washing through a mangle. The clothes props — usually a forked sapling — which held up the sagging clothes lines were equally hard to manage. Emma knew the anguish of seeing her washing drop into a sea of mud when the prop gave way, often in a heavy downpour, so that it had to be gathered up and washed again. As in England, ironing was done with heavy irons heated on a wood stove. The heat of summer...
made this job particularly exhausting, and caused women to list ironing as their most detested job.

Washing day was also floor-cleaning day. On hands and knees, women scrubbed wooden floors with the hot suds from the copper until the boards were white and clean — an occupation that led to housemaid’s knee. Wooden kitchen tables were also scrubbed, until they developed an almost white patina. The only aid in the daily domestic routine was elbow grease and, for the mother of a large family, a school-age daughter who could stay home on washing day. Finally, there was the mending to do. Woollen socks and stockings relished by moths had to be regularly darned, and household linen was patched again and again.

Queensland’s glorious winter sunshine was offset by its wet and humid summer season which did nothing to improve William Calderwood’s health. He died on 6 June 1880, fifteen months after the family’s arrival in Brisbane. It was a difficult time for Emma, a long way from family and friends who could have provided emotional and financial support. But she was a woman of strong character and enterprise and soon coped with her second widowhood.

She again sought employment as a gentleman’s white shirtmaker and found that her training in Manchester made her a unique seamstress in Brisbane. She could measure, cut out, machine, buttonhole, and finish by hand, and had no difficulty in finding work with the big stores. She worked from home and dealt directly with stores such as Finney, Isles & Co., McNab, and Edwards and Chapman, and gained a reputation as a reliable and able seamstress.

Soon after the Calderwoods’ arrival in Brisbane, Emma’s youngest son, George, had enrolled at the Normal School at the corner of Edward and Adelaide Streets, but when he turned twelve he decided to leave school and work to help Emma with the family finances — a move of which Emma strongly disapproved. She told him that it was important that he remain at school, but that if he was determined to leave, there would be no turning back. After several months working the long tiring hours of a shop assistant, with little time for leisure activities, he realised that he had been wrong. He found, however, that Emma was rigid
when it came to sticking to decisions. She was adamant: he did not return to school. Later he became very knowledgeable on many subjects through self-education, and at one stage was employed by W. Chisholm & Co. (Direct Importers of General Drapery) in Leichhardt Street, Spring Hill.

To Emma, who had grown up in a coalmining environment and had experienced industrial Salford and Manchester, Brisbane must at first have appeared a paradise with its blue skies and fresh, open spaces. And the quality of her life did improve. Although rents were higher, food was cheaper; meat, a luxury in England, was served three times a day. As well, in the subtropical climate, heating was necessary for only a few months a year.

Nevertheless, Emma found that the inequalities of Europe also existed in Queensland — no votes for women, no factory legislation, no compensation laws, no sick pay, and no old-age pensions to give a sense of security. And poor sanitation and drainage was again one of the worst features of life.

New environment, old ideas
The 1880s were to be a turning point for Emma. Among new immigrants to the country, she was to find many kindred spirits, and on 21 October 1886 at forty-seven, she married for the third time. Her new husband, Andrew Miller, who was seventy-six, had migrated from Dalry in Scotland in 1863 and had a son, Andrew Dunlop Miller, by his first wife, Mary Reid. Under her new name, Emma Miller was to become known and respected nationally.

Among the immigrants to Brisbane Emma met were those who were to become linked with her in the emerging vigorous and idealistic labour movement. They included the Collings family — Joseph Silver and Mary Ann and their four children, Joseph Silver Junior, Ernest Silver, Walter Silver and Florence Silver. (Silver stems from an Irish childhood friend of their grandfather and is believed to have connections with silver mining.) The family lived above their store in Hamilton where “the first Sunday of each month was set aside for an AT HOME to which all comers were welcome for conversation, argument and general free-for-all; the girl who later became Dame Mary Gilmore often attended”. 13 Joseph Junior (Joe), who was eighteen at the time of
their arrival in 1883, became one of Emma’s greatest admirers and a fellow activist. The whole family enjoyed her friendship and were involved with her in campaigns for social and political reform. Another immigrant — and one who was to become a most influential leader of the labour movement — was William Lane. He made his mark freelancing for local newspapers and was soon recognised as a brilliant and influential journalist. During his boyhood he had been influenced by his mother’s courage and devotion, and constant struggle against the poverty created by her husband’s constant drinking. She inspired in him a practical sympathy for working women and he was horrified to discover that thousands of women were experiencing similar humiliation to that faced by his mother. As a result, “his personal reaction widened into a social generalisation. He learned to link the sadness of his mother with the wrongs he discovered in his readings”. He was also influenced by the theories on land nationalisation and a single tax on land outlined in Henry George’s *Progress and Poverty* and Richard Bellamy’s American utopian socialist novel *Looking Backward*. He was concerned at the injustices of society and convinced of the need for radical reform. In him, Emma found a kindred soul, a fellow socialist with a keen understanding of, and sympathy for, the workers. Through the pages of local papers and later as co-owner-editor of the *Boomerang*, he advocated, among other things, the early closing of shops, Sunday recreation, an eight-hour working day and religious liberty, and exposed sweated working conditions.

When Wallace Nelson, a Freethought lecturer, arrived in Brisbane from England in 1888, also with the aim of improving his health, Emma joined Nelson, Thomas Walker, a Mrs Selby, and others who stood for religious liberty in forming a local Freethought Association. Weekly lectures were held on Sunday evenings at the Lyceum Hall where Wallace Nelson lectured on such subjects as the religion of humanity, revolution, rationalism and popular sciences, soon becoming known as the high priest of Freethought. Emma often spoke at these meetings and became known in Brisbane for her radical opinions. In later years, Joe Collings commented that it was impossible for those living in the early twentieth century and “acquainted only with present condi-
tions to picture the difficulties which had to be fought in the early days’ when it was ‘‘not safe to say anything about religion which was not orthodox’'. He said that there was ‘‘nothing being uttered to-day which was half as dangerous as were some of the speeches Mrs Miller and her colleagues were in the habit of uttering’’. No records of those speeches and activities appear to have survived.

The 1880s were boom years of flamboyant prosperity created by the opening of new goldfields and a jump in wool prices leading to an influx of overseas capital. The pastoralists had divided the vast Queensland inland into sheep and cattle stations and they controlled the state’s politics through their parliamentary representatives such as Griffith and McIlwraith who was premier when Emma arrived in the colony. The owners of the sugarcane plantations were also growing wealthy at the expense of the slave labourers brought from the Pacific Islands by the notorious blackbirders.

Large sums were being spent by the Government on public works, communications and transport. Industry flourished as food, clothing and housing were required for the influx of immigrants. Although the economy was rural based, Australia had become more urbanised than either Great Britain or America. Emma watched as the wave of prosperity was reflected in the changing skyline of the city. New public buildings, banks and large stores appeared in the city streets. Hotels, such as the Belle Vue with its attractive wrought-iron railings, added character to the scene. The railways, the great symbol of progress, began to link suburbs and country towns, ports and remote settlements, and new areas opened up as people settled along the railway routes.

Local entrepreneurs grew affluent as speculators saw the possibility of making a ‘‘quick quid’’ by cashing in on the demand for housing. They replaced forests with houses, and cut swampland into wretched allotments, where householders were later rudely awakened as heavy rain washed them out and left them in the middle of a quagmire. Land syndicates had also bought suburban land cheaply and, in spite of Brisbane’s wide open spaces, cut up properties into such small allotments that working people were forced to live in cramped conditions with little that could be called a yard.
Overriding all these problems were the health hazards that existed in the streets of Brisbane, with open sewers, garbage piled high in open spaces, and reeking cesspits only a few feet from kitchens. Dead animals and nightsoil were left to rot at the Kelvin Grove depot, and the unfiltered water was undrinkable. Residents claimed that this coffee-coloured water, which came from the Enoggera dam, had an unpleasant smell and at times contained "tiny dead fish", to be fit only for the garden and continued to install tanks to capture the run-off of soft rainwater from their roofs. Creek Street, in the city, was still incomplete and in the last unfilled section of the creek bed, "vegetation and rubbish contend [ed] for possession". In the 1880s the legacy of these twin evils of poor sanitation and inadequate pure water was typhoid fever.

Emma was very concerned at the poor housing and unhealthy conditions under which working people were expected to live. She kept picturing the slums and desperate poverty of Chesterfield and, more particularly, of Salford and Manchester. Although Brisbane's housing was better than that in such slums, she was afraid that the same impoverished and unhygienic conditions would be introduced into Queensland. She believed: "No city that possesses slums can be termed a great city. No nation that possesses extremes of poverty can be called a great nation." Through the labour movement she was to devote her energies to fighting this possibility, and to gaining improved living conditions for working people.

Emma had not been in the colony long before becoming conversant with the conditions of women working as domestics, outworkers, milliners, tailoresses, dressmakers and shop assistants. She knew that male immigrants had brought with them their antagonism to women in the workforce, and that the same class divisions and inequalities between the sexes existed. Girls were denied access to higher education: women workers were restricted to the menial and humdrum tasks and their wages were lower than men's: young children had to work to contribute to the family income: and married women lacked basic legal rights to property and children. The idea of separate spheres for men and
women was still accepted: women workers were alienated from the trade union movement: and no woman had the right to vote.

Emma became involved in campaigns in relation to many of these issues, but her first concern was the conditions of working women and the question of their organisation into trade unions. She became an active participant in the Early Closing Association and the formation of the early women's trade unions, and later in all the turbulent conflicts of the 1890s.

Emma continued working as a seamstress, and was able to command a better wage than most, but she was acutely aware of the degrading and wretched conditions of the majority of women outworkers. She found that in Brisbane, as in England, outworkers were paid miserable wages by the sweaters. She also heard of many cases where "slop work" farmed out by the sweaters was not paid for at the rates contracted. She knew that men, particularly in the boot trades, also brought work home and that it often involved the whole family. Women worked night and day to help, but their effort was seen as a labour of love not requiring reward, necessary though it might be for family survival. Other women worked for the sweaters in the unhealthy, insanitary cellars of Frogs' Hollow, which were gaslit all day.

When Thomas Glassey, MLA, the only member representing labour's interests, raised the question of these conditions in the House, and asked whether they were "proper or right in a climate like this", other members protested. They refused to accept that sweating existed in Brisbane, preferring to believe their own propaganda that Queensland was a workers' paradise.

As a journalist, however, William Lane was able to draw public attention to the problems of working people. He pointed out that it was not a paradise for working men and was even less so for working women:

The position of the working women in the cities of this colony . . . is becoming worse and worse every year as the struggle for existence deepens around us . . . They are becoming herded into stifling workshops and ill-ventilated attics; they are dragged back to work late into the summer nights; and they are forced to stand from morning to night behind the counters of the large emporiums . . . They are "sweated" by clothing factories and boot factories. Little ones who should be at school or at play are working in factories and shops, and the law, in-
stead of rescuing them, stands by to ply the whip on their backs if they revolt.\textsuperscript{20}

\begin{quote}
I am the woman who runs her race  
in the sweat-shop hot and dark,  
Feverish haste; a searing pain,  
that pierces my shoulders again and again,  
Till my arms grow numb with the strain.
\end{quote}

\textit{Marjorie Aubrey, 'Woman Song', Womans Today, February 1939}

Women entered the workforce in large numbers in the late 1880s and were blamed for causing unemployment and lowering men’s wages, particularly in the tailoring and printing trades. Often, as a means of banishing women from their workplace, men argued that jobs were too heavy for women. The real issue, of course, was a deep-rooted fear that women would take men’s jobs. Cheap labour provided by women, some argued, was ruining male trades and the obstacles to young men’s ability to keep a wife were “yearly becoming greater”: “it is sad to contemplate the loss of women’s mission on earth by her enforced maidenhead”.\textsuperscript{21}

By the end of the 1880s, women were working as seamstresses, tailoresses, shop assistants, domestics, waitresses, nurses, teachers, machinists in the boot trades, governesses, in unskilled jobs in the printing industry, and in factories. Some also worked as barmaids in the private bars of hotels, where moralists accused them of showing the “evil side of their nature by their efforts to lure men to their destruction”.\textsuperscript{22}

In the factories, women were relegated to unskilled mundane jobs, such as filling biscuit packets and washing and filling bottles at Marchant’s cordial factory — boring, repetitive jobs that did nothing to develop their abilities or make them feel respected. The Brisbane factories were not as large as those in Sydney and Melbourne, many being no more than workshops. Some were in basements or in attics, and others had unlined walls and iron roofs...
which became excessively hot in summer and cold in winter, so that workers remained exhausted long after returning home. Jam factories, particularly, with their continual boiling liquids, became “veritable instruments of torture”.\textsuperscript{23} To beat the heat, workers filled their boots with water or held wet handkerchiefs to their foreheads. To migrants a day’s work in Brisbane’s summer was worse than two days’ work in Britain, and the asphalt floors led to numerous ailments of the feet.

Workshops were grossly overcrowded, poorly lit and lacking in adequate sanitation or ventilation. One observer, May Jordan, asked, “Did you ever watch a number of girls coming out of their workrooms? How many of them looked rosy and strong? Very few! And those only from workrooms where there was plenty of fresh air.” She described a workroom which was merely a loft measuring ten feet by eighteen feet with one small window and the only door a trapdoor. It also contained a stove for pressing. Five men and ten women worked in this stifling atmosphere, which not surprisingly made them feel faint. Yet they made no complaint. “Why?” she said. “Because if they did there would be none to help.”\textsuperscript{24}

Emma had a deep sympathy for working mothers who returned home to a second shift of unpaid housework with few conveniences to lighten their load, and agreed that it left no time for “reading, thinking or any of the pleasures which make life worth living”.\textsuperscript{25} She felt, too, for women whose life centred around regular child-bearing. Drained of energy and confined to their homes, they had to seek work compatible with their circumstances in order to feed their growing families. They took in dress-making, washing and ironing or outwork, sacrificed a room for lodgers, or, in extreme cases, resorted to prostitution.

Emma was not alone in knowing that it was a myth that men were the only breadwinners. Writing in the \textit{Boomerang}, Leontine Cooper, a recognised writer on women’s issues, said: Stubborn facts must be met that a large number of women do not marry; that the average age at which marriages are contracted has risen considerably of late years, and that of those women who do marry, a large number have to work for their own maintenance and that of their children . . . the proportion of women who have
to work is very large. Nevertheless, society was unable to come to terms with the position of those who worked, either by choice or by force of economic circumstances — the spinsters, deserted wives, widows, wives of the sick and unemployed. In receipt of only half of the male rate or less, they often found themselves in dire straits. The claim that women would eventually marry and were only filling in time until the happy day arrived was the employers’ justification for the low rates they paid to girls. This argument was brought forward so consistently that girls themselves believed it. A girl’s wage was considered to be a supplementary one, and therefore was not expected to be equivalent to a man’s wage. They were thus denied the just and “invincible right claimed by all members of a state, the right to labour and to enjoy the fruits of their labour”.  

Working women were producing much of the wealth and receiving little in return. It wasn’t pity they wanted but a living wage. “Work,” May Jordan said, “Should be paid for by value”. Emma agreed, and throughout her life campaigned for equal pay: whenever women were accused of taking men’s jobs or lowering their wages, she preached equal pay as the solution.

It was a time of “relentless bitterness and cruel victimisation of those who espoused the workers’ cause”, yet Emma fought on behalf of the sweated workers. Her life became bound up with the Trades Hall: she earned a reputation as a supporter of trade union activities, someone who could be depended on to be there in times of strife — for example, during strikes and times of unemployment — always willing to assist, never having to be asked. But her main concern was the exploitation of women and the lack of male trade union support. She set out to convince trade union officials and others of the importance of organising women workers.

In spite of her busy life, Emma found time for other interests. She enjoyed auction sales where she revelled in the excitement of bidding, and was also said to be a woman of musical, literary and artistic taste, who “after delving into books on history, sociology and economics would happily bury herself in the romance of a good novel”. The theatre was her great love and her youngest
children, Kate and George, later joined a dramatic troupe that toured the state performing melodramas such as Hobson’s Choice. The main theatres were the Royal, the Gaiety and Her Majesty’s Opera House. There were also sixpenny concerts at Centennial Hall, which were well patronised by workers’ families. To performances, Emma took pleasure in wearing tortoiseshell combs set with diamonds given her by Andrew Miller. They came from Brazil and the family thought they were probably industrial diamonds. Emma once arrived home with the skull from a production of Hamlet, a smoking jacket, and a large red shirt that George took delight in flying from the veranda every Labour Day for years after. She had bought them from a Shakespearean actor down on his luck. She also loved music and, it was said, “the most intricate classical music spoke to her with a voice she could well understand”. She appreciated any form of art and “her comment on pictures proved her possession of true instinct in art”.

Throughout this period Emma and Andrew lived at George Street, Kangaroo Point with George Calderwood. George took over Andrew Miller’s job as a Customs House Agent at the time of his death in 1897.
Three

These things we intend to alter

Now Master likes you docile
   and Master likes you shy
And Master says it will be all right
   in the sweet bye and bye.
"Don't join the wicked union," you
   will always hear him say,
But you will find to organise is
   still the only way.¹

Jim Crawford

Throughout the world, women were taking a militant stand against their exploitation. In London in 1888 the revolt of the match girls, led by Annie Besant, awakened the public conscience when people heard of their low wages and the fines imposed on them for the slightest misdemeanor. Seamstresses in New Zealand also exposed their exploitation when they combined their strike action with street demonstrations. Closer to home, though, was the Melbourne tailoresses' strike of 1882 — a strike that gained public support when people became aware of the continual wage cuts imposed by the tailoring company. Following this successful strike the Victorian tailoresses formed a union, and sent two delegates to the second Intercolonial Trades Union Congress of 1885. (The first congress, held in 1879, attracted only two delegates from outside New South Wales.) The 1885 Congress was noted for representing every trade and industry, as well as for being attended for the first time by women delegates. The two women received a special round of applause, but future congresses consisted entirely of men.

Two delegates to the Brisbane Trades and Labour Council meeting in 1886 spoke of the need to organise women into the unions, but neither women nor the Chinese were welcome in the trade unions of the time: tailors were as much against the employment of women as cabinet makers were against the employment of Chinese. They blamed the reduction in their wages, not on the
employers, but on female labour and women’s acceptance of sweated pay rates. And in explaining its case during a printing industry dispute, the Queensland Typographical Association said that the principle of not employing non-union labour was as much a principle of unionism as the non-employment of women and Chinese.

In New South Wales Louisa Lawson met similar prejudice and intolerance from the local Typographical Association when she employed female compositors on her newspaper, the *Dawn*, which was produced by an all-female staff. Compositors, the elite of the working class who commanded better conditions than most other workers, opposed the employment of women, and their union declared a boycott on firms that gave them jobs. They harassed women workers at the *Dawn* by reflecting the sun from mirrors positioned in a building opposite to dazzle them. Claiming that their objection to employing women was in the interests of humanity, the union refused women membership and then condemned Louisa Lawson for employing non-union labour. Women were angered at such examples of one class of workers imposing restrictions on another instead of uniting in common cause.

Emma deplored the fact that the trade union officials did not accept women into their unions, and that instead they criticised women for taking men’s jobs. Leontine Cooper wrote:

> Why should women be prevented from entering into competition in the labour market on the same footing as men . . .? Because the laws which at present govern the price of labour are unjust why should she be made the chief victim? Is not man’s sense of justice large enough and strong enough to allow her to come and work by his side and fight, not against her, but against the system which robs the labourer of his share in the wealth he creates, and so, by the fierceness of competition, prevents either from earning more than a mere pittance? 2

Inspired by the Melbourne tailoresses, attempts were made to organise the tailoresses of Brisbane. Moves in 1887 and 1889 failed, mainly because women on a bare subsistence wage were unable to pay the union fees necessary to keep their union viable. The failure of these attempts concerned Emma. She continued to push for union organisation for women workers, pointing out
that while they remained unorganised, employers were the only ones to benefit.

Emma was supported in her campaign by William Lane, who saw the need for a new unionism separate from the old craft unions which were imprisoned by their own narrow perceptions. He envisaged uniting all workers, all unions, skilled and unskilled, men and women, into a mass organisation through which unionists would stand by each other in their struggles for an end to exploitation and injustice. Through his inspiration, the Trades and Labour Council in 1889 was replaced by the Australian Labour Federation (ALF), the first step in the realisation of his dream. It was planned that it would eventually become a national organisation, but outside Queensland it remained merely an ambitious scheme.

Lane also conceived the idea of running a newspaper under union ownership and control, free of the influence of advertisers' wishes — a paper reflecting the ideology of working people, their hopes and aspirations, their discontents and victories; a genuine workers' newspaper. Thus the Worker was born, its name being suggested by the wife of Charles Seymour, secretary of the Seamen's Union. As editor, William Lane was to have a powerful effect on the democratic sentiment of the nineties.

The Worker became the official organ of the Australian Labour Federation and soon enjoyed a large circulation. Through its pages Lane was able, for the first time in Australia, to link socialism to the mass labour movement, thus countering narrow trade unionism. He preached “socialism in our time” — a utopian socialism based on Looking Backward. Bellamy's novel, which he serialised in the Worker, pictured a world of equality, where women would share wealth equally with men, crime would be unknown and love and kindness would prevail. It was to have a great influence on the thinking of Australian workers, greater even than the writings of Marx and Engels.

Having united the skilled and unskilled into the ALF, Lane turned his attention to bringing women workers into the unions. As editor of the Worker, he conducted a constant propaganda campaign on issues confronting women as workers. In March 1890 he drew attention to the New South Wales Typographical
Union which had turned away a Miss Hill, who had been fully trained in her trade in New Zealand, on the grounds that no woman should be a printer. Miss Hill, he said, could ‘fulfil all the conditions of membership except that ‘she’ cannot become a ‘journeymen’. Lane went on to outline what to him was a fundamental principle:

[I consider] that woman has equally with man the right to earn her own living and enjoy the wealth she creates ... I cannot narrow my idea of solidarity to one sex only and as for getting up any enthusiasm for a crusade against Miss Hill I think it a pity that those with such overflowing enthusiasm should not direct it against the wage system itself ... to refuse to organise her, to turn on her when she offers her hand and slap her face, to treat that Labour which is so holy as a piece of raw flesh over which two wolf-sexes meet and tear each other — is wrong, absolutely and entirely wrong.

Speaking of the injustice of denying a woman the right to work, he continued:

See! I have two children, a girl and a boy. I want them both to be honest workers, earning their bread by willing labour, striving to make the conditions of labour better for each other and for the whole world, and if I knew the time would come when my boy would say to his sister ‘You shall not work thus because you are a woman. You may go on the streets. You may marry for a home. You may sew for a sweater. You may ‘rat’. But this work which you can do you shall not do honestly because you are a woman’ — well, I think I’d advertise ‘To adopt — a boy-baby calculated to get rich’.

In the same Worker issue Lane wrote of a large tailor and outfitter in Maryborough who, in taking advantage of the “absurd cheapness and defencelessness of women workers”, had replaced his men by girls on all but coats and other better class work. He had then cut men’s wages to less than half and paid the girls half that. “So the cut-throating goes on,” he wrote, “girls cutting men’s wages, and men being unable to marry, thus driving the girls to cut against each other till wages are at a charity level.” The solution, he said, was for men to recognise women as “fellow workers and assist them to secure the same pay for the same work, regardless of sex”.

The following month, writing under his nom de plume Lucinda Sharpe, Lane pointed out: “[Women workers] are wretchedly cheap and there won’t be good times for them until they make
themselves dear . . . if women's wages were to be made even as high as men's are now, there would be a change in a year that would make life almost a paradise". He chided men for not considering women workers and the time they spent both in paid labour and in unpaid domestic labour at home, concluding, "Women, of course, were meant to work seventeen hours a day. It is only men who know what to do with the eight hours."

Towards the end of 1890, the ALF set out to form a women's section, expressing the belief that "only by the aid of the stronger" could the weaker "hope to secure that social justice which is the right of all". Commenting in the Worker, it said, "[The time has come] to declare that the woman-worker shall no longer be left to struggle unaided against the conditions which oppress her even more than they oppress the men, and to enable her to share with her fellow workers in the benefits of unionism and to fight side by side with them for the emancipation of labour". It called on every union and unionist to assist in every possible way in the establishment of the women's section.

With May Jordon as its official organiser, it was planned that the women's section would form a female workers union for both social and labour purposes. At first, it would include all trades employing women, and as membership grew a union would be formed for each trade. The objectives of the women's union were "to procure improved conditions of labour; to procure recognition of the fact that labour should be paid as labour and without regard for sex or circumstances of the labourer and to secure justice in existing arrangements".

The union was not formed overnight; it took a great deal of energy, plastering factories with notices at night and making personal contact with working women. In this work Emma was adept and experienced. William Lane did a wonderful propaganda job through the pages of the Worker, but it was the ground work of people like Emma Miller that determined the success of their efforts. It was hard and persistent work. Emma and her fellow workers reached working women outside their workplaces, or, wherever they gathered, and patiently explained the importance of having their own union, an organisation to fight for them as a group, rather than having the one-to-one confrontation that
often meant dismissal. The choice was either continued exploitation or union organisation. They stressed that starvation wages were a direct result of their being unorganised. They gave women the hope that through union membership they could achieve a little more to live on, better working conditions, shorter hours, a happy, healthier life. They realised that to some women the word "union" conjured up an impression of strikes and explained that strikes were a last resort, to be undertaken only when all other avenues had been exhausted.  

Emma spent a great deal of time convincing male union officials and unionists that female workers were as important to the trade union movement as the unions were to the women. She was not anti-male, but worked in the interests of the labour movement as a whole while paying particular attention to the special problems of women.

May Jordan, Emma Miller and the other organisers also set out to find key people in industries employing women. In July 1890, Sarah Bailey and Miss Nixon, from Hunters Boot Factory, successfully organised the machinists in their industry into a union, but without assistance from the male trade union leaders. In fact, it was not until the turn of the century that the union's minutes gave any indication that women actually worked in the industry; and then it was to suggest that a ballot for free tickets to an opera be left for the female members to organise.

The moves to form the women's union were met with opposition from the employers, and the organisers were branded dangerous agitators. (Joe Collings was later to recall that Emma's efforts on behalf of the women working in the factories and shops were made at a time when "every word spoken and every act done to help the helpless was to call down upon one all the bitterness and the hatred of the sweater and the exploiter".) Nevertheless, a successful first meeting of the union was held in September 1890.

May Jordan, as the official organiser for the women's section, gave a lengthy and interesting speech explaining the need for the union and its plans. To the women who had gathered she said: "No one has any right to attempt to grow rich at the expense of the happiness of other human beings, and we as women will show
that they shall not. This will not all come about at once, not in a day or a year perhaps, but it will come and how soon depends on how hard we work to bring it about”. She told them that the great improvement in men’s wages showed that there was only one way to bring about a change for the better and that was by combining in a union; she did not think any employer would be foolish enough to dismiss those who joined. “We have the promise of all the men unionists to stand by us,” she said, “and if an employer were to illtreat a woman unionist he would find himself very uncomfortable; the men do not intend to see any one of the women’s union ill used.” She referred to the fact that some women workers had been told that it was not in their interests to join the union: “All I can say is, that if raising your wages, shortening your hours and generally improving your conditions is not to your interest it is a very strange thing. I should rather think that the people who told you so, thought that your improvement was not in their interest and if so it is selfishness on their part and ought not to be regarded.”

She told them that as previous attempts to form a women’s union had failed through lack of finance the ALF had subscribed enough money to keep the union going for six months and that the Eight Hours Association had offered free use of a room in Kent’s building. On one night per week it was proposed to hold a general meeting at which they would discuss matters relative to the union and of interest to women, not “sewing, dusting, etc., but such subjects as education, marriage, etc”. Once a month girls could invite a man friend who didn’t necessarily have to be a unionist. “But,” she said, “I have not a doubt that he will soon become one, if the girls are earnest and enthusiastic enough about it themselves. Women can influence men for their good to almost any extent if they go about it gently, earnestly and honestly.” She planned to be in the rooms every day from noon until 2 p.m. so that “such girls as find it convenient” could “rest, read and get a cup of tea”. It was also planned to start a girls home in a central position, where girls would be able to board for less than the rate at existing boarding houses, and to have the girls run it themselves — an idea that did not eventuate.

May Jordan outlined the policy of the proposed union, saying it
aimed to raise a woman's wage to a level which would allow her
"to keep herself honestly if she have no home to fall back on". She also pointed out that if a woman didn't feel fit and strong enough to do her daily work it was either because she hadn't enough to live on, was worn out by long hours, or worked in too close and unhealthy an atmosphere. "These things", she said, "we intend in time to alter". Work, she added should be paid for by value: "It does not matter who does it, man or woman. The best work should get the best pay." 18

By the end of September, the union's membership included people from nine occupations — waitresses, nurses, milliners, machinists, photographers, domestics, shop assistants and, the best organised, the tailoresses. Misses Gray and Fraser were elected delegates to the District Council of the ALF.

The Women's Union first set out to abolish the no-sitting rule for shop assistants and school teachers, and to gain shorter shop hours, equal pay, payment for apprentices, payment for overtime, and improved working conditions in other areas. It flourished for some time with branches in Winton, Charters Towers, Townsville, Blackall and Hughenden. Members of the newly formed Machinists' Union, comprising women working in the boot trades, came over to the Women's Union.

With two-thirds of the union's membership being tailoresses, large dressmakers and some shopkeepers were bitterly opposed to the union and attempted to intimidate its members. Criticism also came from Leontine Cooper, who complained that the girl members of the union were indifferent to its policies and were more interested in enjoying its social gatherings.19 She also claimed that the Women's Union was unable to function satisfactorily because it covered too many trades, and that it would be far better for the girls to become members of their respective trade unions. She strongly condemned the male trade unions for not admitting women and asked, "Why should half mankind be condemned to starve so that the other half can live in comfort?" 20

As with much of women's activity, only tantalising glimpses remain in records of the period. The Women's Union was, for example, represented at the laying of the foundation stone of the Brisbane Trades Hall by Sir Charles Lilley in 1891. For this occa-
Proud to be a Rebel

sion, workers marched from the vacant ground at the corner of Ann and Boundary Streets where it was customary to hold open-air meetings. The representatives of the Women's Union were conveyed in cabs and the route was deeply lined with men, women and children who later witnessed the ceremony and heard Miss Annis Montague (Mrs Turner) sing the "Australian Marseillaise".

Some members of the union were involved in strike action. At McNab's tailoring establishment, which was located in the basement of the Telegraph building, the air was foul, the light poor and the conditions cramped. Feeling the strength of an organised union behind them, the girls downed tools and forced McNab to move his premises to street level. In February 1891, Leontine Cooper came to the defence of the union and its policies:

> It has been the subject of much unkindly remark and the objects at which they aim have been so travestied that the fairness for which a British public has always been remarkable demands a few words on the other side . . . It can scarcely be fairly said that women's unions are acting contrary to the interests of society in trying to remedy the injustice of having the work valued by the sex of the labourer instead of by the value of the labour performed. The present injustice reacts on society by increasing the number of fallen women.

She added: "Since the formation of the Women's Union overtime has been paid for at some houses where it formerly was not paid".  

The end of the boom in 1891 resulted in large-scale unemployment and wreaked havoc with the trade union movement. Membership fell off in registered unions, and all but a few ceased to exist. Among them was the Women's Union.

Life of the slavey

Although the Women's Union was instrumental, for a time, in organising many working women, it had difficulty unionising the domestics. The growing demand for servants was a gauge of middle-class prosperity, and in 1891 domestic servants constituted 45 per cent of the female workforce. In Brisbane those families able to afford a servant managed with one while the wealthy employed several. The Situations Vacant columns of local newspapers were filled with calls for strong young generals,
mothers helps, laundresses and cooks. Domestic service was considered a natural vocation for girls, an ideal job requiring “women’s skills” and not in competition with men. People were convinced that work as a servant was an ideal apprenticeship for marriage — the training ground, however, was often far from happy. An article in the *Boomerang* described the servant girl as a “patient monument of suffering” whose freedom was curtailed, often in unhealthy surroundings, “to a limit little short of slavery”, and expressed concern that she would have her independence as a woman “annihilated during her probation as a servant”. As servile mothers, it suggested, they would produce servile children, and servility was out of place in a healthy society.\(^2\) The servility the article decries was spelt out in a poem of the time:

> When first in service I was young, ’tis true  
> And like other young people, but little I knew.  
> My parents thus charged me, "Be just and upright  
> Mind too, whatever your mistress may say,  
> Attend, recollect and exactly obey".  
> 
> With girls constantly leaving to get married, the turnover of domestics was high. They came from local working-class families, from surrounding country areas and orphanages, and from institutions for “fallen women”\(^3\) and from Aboriginal tribes to work on local sheep and cattle properties. It was also suspected that women who fostered state children for payment sometimes did so as a means of getting a servant. Not all lived in, but the opportunity to do so was an inducement to many young girls unable to support themselves on the wages paid in other jobs. Many domestic servants obviously had happy experiences and were treated as one of the family, but for others there was much dissatisfaction. They were the only group of workers whose conditions were controlled by other women, and the wide gap between their lives and that of their mistresses was continually before them. The servant resented the idle “lady of the house”, and their own long hours, inadequate wages and dependence on the generosity of their employers. Their work was continuous, tiring and monotonous.

Restrictions on the lives of workers who lived in made domes-
tic service different from other jobs. Employers were often haughty and insolent, and expected domestics to know their place. Leontine Cooper told how a girl could still be a stranger in the house months after first being employed. She knew the affairs of her employer, and could make a shrewd guess as to the family skeletons and the true dispositions of her employers because they regarded her so completely as a thing apart. At the same time, she was often utterly unknown to them — her history, her interests, her pleasures were of no interest: "The bond between them is her services, her time . . . 'She is only a servant!' is the jibe that cuts the servant girl to the heart . . . And the jibe cuts home because it embodies a cruel truth; she is a 'slavey'; a survival of the past, through the living in the free times of the present", Cooper wrote.

Not all servants were young girls; many older women also toiled over the washtubs, ironing boards and stoves in private homes. In boarding houses and hotels too they supplemented their husbands' meagre wages, often working from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. In one hotel, on a cold morning, a washerwoman was found washing clothes that had been left soaking overnight in water that was now icy, and with no boards to keep her feet out of the sloppy puddles.

Domestics were often involved in accidents in the home, sometimes fatal. The dress of one young servant caught fire while she was poking the clothes in the copper. When she ran in fright, seeking help, she created a breeze that fanned the fire; she later died in hospital. An elderly woman fell and died when a rotten veranda railing gave way.

Although the 1886 Employers Liability Act made employers responsible for injuries to workers if negligence could be proved, the Act did not extend to domestics. City inspectors made sanitation checks of boarding houses but were concerned only with the boarders' living conditions and safety, and not with those of the servants.

The "servant problem" was a familiar phrase in the drawing rooms of the wealthy. Advertisements in Great Britain lured girls with the promise of free passages and bright matrimonial prospects, and promised them excellent wages and good treatment in
families. They found, however, that life as a servant wasn’t quite so rosy.

Emma Miller concerned herself with the servants’ plight. She befriended those who became disillusioned and lonely in an alien environment far from family and friends, and the familiar surroundings of town or village. She not only spoke to them of the importance of trade unions and the need to know their rights, she also became a friend — a mother figure to turn to in their moments of loneliness or depression, and an understanding and sympathetic listener about the trials of their jobs. For many immigrant, as well as local, domestics, Emma represented their first encounter with the ideas of the labour movement. One of these women became the wife of Joe Collings, who later said, “When my wife was a girl in domestic service in this city of Brisbane and before I knew her, Mrs Miller befriended her when she sorely needed friendship. In those days domestic service was much nearer slavery than it is today. Many a time later we talked together of this phase of Mrs Miller’s work.”

This would have been at the time when attempts were being made to form domestic-service unions in Brisbane. A meeting of servants in August 1883 had formed “The Brisbane and District Domestic Servants’ Protection Association”, and demanded, among other things, one free Sunday a fortnight and one half-day each week. What became of the proposed union is unknown, but lack of financial backing invariably meant failure for such moves. As one servant girl complained: “There are laws and unions to prevent cruelty to animals, but unfortunately, there are no laws, unions or societies to protect the poor unfortunate girls who have to work under the name of servants”.

Leontine Cooper also believed that girls in Queensland were better treated and better paid than those in England, but was concerned that because employers had contracted for a girl’s time they could claim it during any of the day’s twenty-four hours without paying extra. This, she said, was what the womens unions would try to right. The isolated domestics proved difficult to organise, however, although a few joined the Women’s Union in Brisbane, and domestics in western areas were unionised during the Shearers’ Strike.
The majority of women giving birth to illegitimate babies were servant girls who were at the mercy of their male employers and their sons. During the 1890 parliamentary debates, Charles Powers, MLA, asked: “Who are the parents of children sent to orphanages? Time after time we see the same thing — domestic servant, domestic servant — the time has come when we should give women the right to say whether this is to continue — whether we shall hang a man if he commits rape and treat him like a gentleman if he seduces a poor innocent girl.”

During the debate on the Criminal Law Amendment Bill of 1891 which sought to raise the age of consent for girls, the Hon. William Brookes took a different view when he argued that Brisbane was full of evil girls who “from their positions as nurse girls and domestics had peculiar facilities for inveigling the sons of respectable people, and they made use of those facilities”. These sons could then be branded felons and be ruined for life, he warned.

Apart from her isolation and degrading subservience the domestic was separated from her family and friends, unlike the factory girl who worked with friends and returned each evening to her home. A letter to the Worker, signed L.C., expressed the humanist view that much of the problem could be obviated by the “house worker being engaged by time as any other labourer”. The writer said that when the servant could do her work and be free at the end of the day, the objection to domestic work would be removed. Factory girls would then turn to the more varied and healthy domestic jobs: “Mistresses will learn the necessary lesson that whether to be well treated or ill-treated girls cannot be hired, body and soul, by any of their fellows.”

The Early Closing Association

The emergence of department stores in the second half of the century had brought a growth in the employment of women. By 1891 three hundred of the fifteen hundred people employed in shops were women, including those employed in shop workrooms — milliners, tailors and dressmakers.

Few working women — and especially not the shop assistants — escaped sweated conditions during this period. Although con-
Shop early — give the weary
A little breathing space
To make the toil less dreary.
The shattered nerves to brace
The white slaves chains to lighten.

_Worker_, 9 December 1893

sidered more "genteel" than factory work, a shop assistant's job was equally fatiguing. Hours were long, up to eleven hours on weekdays and fourteen on Saturdays, with the majority working from fifty to seventy hours a week. Even during slack periods, they dared not sit for, according to the _Worker_, a "wage slave sitting down does not give the impression of painful and eternal alertness that the employers love to see". To gain relief, the more innovative assistants would find something to kneel on for a few minutes or pretend to be searching for something on the floor — anything to take the weight off their aching feet and ease their weary bodies.

Many shops were insufficiently ventilated or cleaned and the dust from fabrics and fancy goods caused distress. At night when the gaslights were lit, the atmosphere became even more oppressive, and was made still worse by the clothes women wore — high-necked, ankle-length, long-sleeved frocks, often with several petticoats underneath. As most shops lit the gas at about 6 p.m., and even earlier in winter, staff suffered from the stifling atmosphere for several hours. Doctors frequently advised shop workers to leave their jobs because of the debilitating effects on their health. As the shop doors closed behind them, often as late as 10 o’clock at night, the staff then faced a weary tramp home, for few could afford bus fares on their meagre wages. Larrikins, often grouped into local "pushes", created an extra problem for late-night women workers trying to reach home. As May Jordan described it: "Then there are the late nights, when after a hard day’s work, a woman has to find her way home near midnight, weary and dispirited, subject to all temptations of that hour, and in a city where, by the very laws of the land, the honour of woman is not
sacred". Saturday night was worst for the majority of shop assistants would still be working as late as 10 p.m. or 11 p.m., often without a regular meal break.

Before the formation of the Women’s Union, shop workers were involved in the Shop Assistants’ Early Closing Association (ECA). Early attempts to form an early closing association dated back to the 1860s, but it was not until the late 1880s that the movement began to make an impact, with moves being made in centres throughout Queensland, such as Maryborough, Rockhampton and the Brisbane suburbs. Finally, support from the Trades and Labour Council led, in January 1889, to a large Brisbane Town Hall meeting where the Early Closing Association was officially established. It embraced all shop workers.

Emma had an intimate knowledge of shop conditions. Her son George worked for a time in the Spring Hill drapery store owned by W. Chisholm, once a secretary of an early closing association, but then known as a “late hour draper”. George was later dismissed due, as his reference states, “to an alteration in our business arrangements”. As a seamstress who collected her work from the large stores, Emma also had personal contact with their staffs. She was very aware of their long hours and the stifling atmosphere of the gaslit stores. It distressed her that women could be sacked for sitting when weary or sick, even during a slack period. She became one of the most active supporters of the ECA, and was respected by its secretary, Frank McDonnell who found her “deeply interested in factory legislation and all economic and advanced industrial reform”. The Early Closing Association was not a trade union, but was affiliated with the ALF and took part with the trade unions in the 1889 campaign for eight-hour legislation. At the mass meeting of six thousand unionists, the ECA carried a banner depicting on one side a carpenter’s shop with the clock set at 1 p.m. and the men going home, and on the other the shopgirls still working with the clock at 11 p.m. The slogan read, “Short hours and happy homes”.

As support for the ECA grew, the shopkeepers, who had banded together in the Brisbane Traders Association, organised a counter campaign for their mutual protection.

The ECA made early attempts to get voluntary closure of shops
by asking individual shopkeepers to sign an agreement to close at 6 p.m. The usual response was "If my neighbour will close, I shall only be too pleased to close"; but many did sign. When it came to the pinch, however, some signatories closed at that time for only a few days. The ECA then released the other traders from the agreement.

Thomas Finney, an enlightened merchant who had once been a member of Dublin's Early Closing Association, was influenced by the ideas of William Lane and gave his support to many movements for social reform. As the proprietor of a very large store, he was able to ignore trade competition and had been closing at 1 p.m. on Saturdays since 1879 and at 6 p.m. on weekdays since 1883. He considered rest and recreation to be of the utmost importance to the body and mind and believed that the change from the "gas heated, vitiated air" of closed shops into the "pure, open air of heaven", combined with the pleasures of the "family circle and social fellowship", all led to brighter, healthier, happier employees. To mark his granting of the Saturday half-

FOUR years ago, in connection with the Principal Houses in this City, we solicited the support of the public in shortening the slavish hours Young Girls and Men were compelled to work on Saturdays, and although only one house in our trade (Messrs. Grimes & Petty) faithfully adhered to the arrangement, yet we heartily thank the people of Queensland for the marked support we have received in this step, which all right-minded people must admit is one in the cause of HUMANITY.

Looking to the encouragement which we have already received, and knowing the Great Benefits resulting to Employers and Employés in having reasonable hours for rest and recreation, we have decided to follow the example of Large Firms in the Cities of the World, by CLOSING our ESTABLISHMENT at 1 p.m. on SATURDAYS, from 1st October next.

We again respectfully solicit the continued help and sympathy of all classes of the community in this Forward Movement, and in no way can they support it so effectually as by doing their business before our Closing Hour on Saturdays, or reserving it until the following Monday.

FINNEY, ISLES & CO.,
BRISBANE.

23TH AUGUST, 1883.

Announcement of early closing by Finney Isles, Figaro. 1 September 1883
day, an annual presentation of money raised by the Charity Fund was held, subscribed to by the employees and subsidised by the firm. His views were summed up in a speech at one such presentation: “Ah! my friends there is more to be considered in this life than the mere making and hoarding of money at any price — it is wretched to spend a lifetime working for money only, without an atom of consideration of sympathy for assistants’ health, home and happiness”. Finney attempted to get other merchants to join him in early closing, but failed. But he urged his own staff to organise in the cause of early closing and keep the movement alive.

With the news that the Factory Bill was to come before Parliament in 1890, the association prepared a petition designed to influence the Bill’s proposals and to rally further public support throughout Queensland. As well as calling for reduced hours for shop workers, the petition opposed overcrowding and the lack of fresh air, light and adequate sanitation in workrooms and cellars. It expressed concern that large numbers of those who were so treated represented the weaker sex, and drew attention to the increasing numbers of school-age children who were working.

(It was estimated in 1888 that fewer than half the children of school age were attending school, in spite of the fact that the 1875 Education Act had made education free, secular and compulsory — the compulsory clause was not enforced until 1900. The children of poorer families had to play truant in order to go to work. They left school at an early age to work in factories, sell newspapers or help with piecework at home. In farming districts schools emptied at harvest time, while some children arrived at school after rising early to milk the cows, only to fall asleep at their desks.)

Emma Miller was never one to stand on the sidelines observing a campaign and she collected signatures and made personal approaches both to organisations and to individuals. She and the other collectors were encouraged by the support they received — “They even get out of bed to sign”, said one man who went door to door one Sunday morning in South Brisbane, a working-class suburb. Within two months more than seventeen thousand signatures had been collected and presented to Parliament; signatories
represented all classes and included shopkeepers from all parts of the colony. Shortly afterwards a supplementary petition attracted four thousand signatures.

The activities of the ECA and the Women’s Union, and Worker articles on Brisbane’s poor working conditions led in 1891 to the establishment of the Royal Commission into Shops, Factories and Workshops.

The original commission of seven men and two women (Leontine Cooper and Grace Neill) nominated by the Government was opposed by the ALF as being dominated by people with middle-class values, and the government bowed to pressure and allowed the unions to nominate three men and two women as extra commissioners. A ballot held by the ALF, with the proviso that no executive members were to be nominated, resulted in the nomination of Sarah Bailey by the Women’s Union, and of May McConnel (nee Jordan) by the Maryborough Female Workers’ Union and the Draymen and Carriers’ Union of Bundaberg. The Employers Association urged equal representation and Elizabeth Edwards and Isabella Isles, wives of well-known traders, also became commissioners. Among the men on the Commission were Frank McDonnell, Thomas Glassey, Thomas Morrow, Dr James Booth, David Dalrymple and John Hunter. The Commission was unique in British politics since it was the first commission on which women were allowed to sit.48

One of the Commissioners, Frank McDonnell, also gave evidence as secretary of the ECA. Asked if he had seen any injurious effects on shop assistants from the long hours they worked, he replied, “I have seen it written across the girls’ faces and the men’s too; I have known direct cases in which consumption and other diseases have been brought on by working long hours in shops”.49 Under cross examination, he explained that a “girl is paid about one third or a quarter of what a man is paid” and that a quarter to half of their pay was subtracted if they were off sick; apprentices were not paid and an employer was not bound to keep on a shop assistant out of apprenticeship. (Others cited cases of apprentices being unpaid for up to twelve months.) McDonnell added, “People suffer a lot on account of wages which nobody knows. You might be working for ten years with a man or woman and not
CUSTOMER: “I think it’s a shame you have to work so late. My husband only has eight hours a day.”
SHOP ASSISTANT: “Do you! Well, why don’t you and your husband contrive to do your shopping earlier. You’re all right, but it’s you and yours who keep me up.”

Early closing cartoon, *Figaro*, 10 August 1889

know what they are paid.” In response to this comment Commissioner Hunter (owner of Hunters Boot Factory) suggested that many traders took on staff and paid them low wages as an act of charity.

McDonnell then gave a summary of the activities of the ECA, and presented their petition and their leaflets for the commissioners to examine. He told them that there had been considerable support and enthusiasm among shopgirls for the campaign during the early stages, but the failure of the petition to achieve results had disenchanted them and membership had fallen. The girls thought that the ECA would go the same way as previous associations and there would be no way of settling the dispute; many had then joined the Women’s Union. Some shopgirls had been afraid to join the ECA because of its affiliation with the ALF and because they feared victimisation.

McDonnell drew attention to other efforts of the ECA to encourage the public to shop early: sandwich men paraded the
streets all day on Saturdays, with their boards urging customers to shop before 6 p.m.; and the ECA had mounted a campaign to have payday changed from Saturday to a weekday so that shopping could be done during the week. McDonnell gave the commissioners a leaflet distributed to workers during the Eight-Hour Day procession which called on them to shop early so that shop workers too could celebrate an eight-hour day; "Never shop after 6", it appealed. Circulars had also been sent to every society to discourage their members from shopping after 6 p.m. All this activity, he told the commissioners, had led to a falling off of late night trading on Saturdays.

Commissioner Leontine Cooper asked Mr Walsh, a shop assistant who was active in the ECA’s campaign, "Do you ‘order’ your missus to go and shop before 6 p.m. or do you ask her?". He replied, "I reckon myself I am master of the house". "You do order her?" she queried. "I reckon I am head of the family and when I say 'I want you to do a thing before 6 p.m.', I expect her to do it", he said. When Commissioner Thomas Glassey asked him if it was "not understood that the wife is always the better part of the man", he replied that he could not answer for everyone, but "My missus, when I ask her to do anything, does it, I do not use the iron hand. I ask her to do it and we live happily." 50

Men, whose wives struggled with the weekly wash, lifting wet and heavy double sheets from a boiling copper, told the commissioners that some retail jobs were too heavy for women. One said the manchester department was not a place for women because the stock was too heavy for females to lift and it would be a cruelty to them. Boot retailer Thomas Penlington of Queen Street was asked by Commissioner Glassey if a woman selling boots and
shoes was as good at sales as men. When he replied, “Not quite as good . . . [because] she has not sufficient muscle for one thing”, Glassey suggested that it did “not require a great deal of muscle to handle a pair of boots”. “To try them on it does”, was the reply. The retailer added that he did not consider it a “ladies trade at all” although he agreed that more women than men applied to him for work.51

Thomas Finney gave evidence to the Commission and revealed that his store now employed 316 people, of whom 158 were girls. The better class business women were employed in departments such as millinery and mantle; those in the showrooms and on counters were better educated than those in the workrooms. He disapproved of legislation for early closing, however, seeing it as inconsistent with personal liberty. He saw moral suasion and a change in public habits as the solution. Nor did he feel it necessary to provide seats for his staff because his store had shorter hours; in any case, he thought if the customers saw girls sitting on the job they would leave and sales would be lost. He suggested that workers didn’t have to accept low wages and long hours: they had the same “liberty of action” as employers, and could refuse to take the job or could leave.52

One shopkeeper asked why he paid boy apprentices but not girls, explained that boys were more useful because they could sweep, run with parcels or clean windows, and that he wouldn’t think of putting girls to that work.

The commissioners continually asked who the late shoppers were. Was it the working people or the gentry — the higher or the lower classes of society? Most replied that they were the working class, particularly the domestics. Commissioner Elizabeth Edwards suggested that a woman who came shopping with children must be from the working class, because it indicated that she had no servant with whom to leave them. It was explained to her that that was not necessarily so: many working-class women would wait until a family member or friend was available to mind their small children.

Doctors agreed that shop assistants’ work had injurious effects; they knew of no greater cruelty than to make a young girl stand for so long a time. It would also unfit girls for married life, they
warned. They stressed that Queensland’s hot climate increased the danger to health, especially to people working in gaslit shops. One doctor even suggested that the dust breathed by shop assistants was worse than the coaldust breathed by miners.

There were divisions of opinion on the commission and two reports were produced. The first report, in its summing up, stated that the majority of testimonies had favoured early closing, but had not agreed on how it was to be achieved. Some had favoured voluntary closing, but trials instigated by the ECA failed because of trade competition and public habit. The majority, however, had advocated legislative action. The report recommended 6 p.m. closing and the provision of seats for female workers; that no children under fourteen should be employed; and that no worker under eighteen should work longer than eight hours in a day or have less than half an hour for meals. It was signed by the labour representatives and all the women, including Elizabeth Edwards and Isabella Isles who were swayed by humanitarian considerations. The Worker concluded: “Where humanity is in question and when she can be reached a woman is ten times as convertible as a man. And when she is converted she is generally ready to sacrifice anything and to stand by her convictions to the bitter end.”

The second minority report signed by commissioners with links to the Traders Association, opposed 6 p.m. closing on the grounds that it would interfere with personal liberty, hamper trade and discourage enterprise. It cited the failure of the Victorian Early Closing legislation as proof that it could not be enforced through state interference. It neglected to say that Victoria’s legislation had failed because it was administered by local councils, all of whom had decided on different closing hours.

Commissioner Booth added a rider based on medical grounds. He recommended that state legislation be enacted for early closing because women were powerless and were “the victims of trade jealousies, trade competition and public habit and any other cause of late shopping hours” which was injurious to their health. Although state interference might cause some infringement of personal liberty, he said, the improvement in the girls’ bodies and minds would far outweigh the loss.

In spite of the Commission’s exposure of the horrific condi-
tions endured by shop workers and of public protest, the Government shelved the report. Once again the ECA stepped up its activities: it held public meetings and in July 1891 launched the *Early Closing Advocate* an eight-page paper which included articles by such figures as William Lane and Leontine Cooper. With a circulation that reached five thousand a month, it managed to counteract the reporting of an unsympathetic press. But six months later an imposition of a special postage rate on newspapers (previously posted free), aimed at closing down the *Worker*, silenced the *Advocate* instead. Emma Miller had enthusiastically supported and sold the *Advocate*, as had most members of the ECA. She shared with the shop assistants their shattered hopes and the frustrations of the campaign, but she always retained a hope for their eventual success.

Baulked at every step, the ECA now tried to get a "one hour concession" — a reduction of the working day by one hour. Once again moral suasion proved a failure, as shopkeepers accepted, and then broke, the agreement. Because of cut throat competition, "the fair employer, too, was compelled to join in the mad race" for profit, which dragged him down to the "same level as the greedy trader". Attempts to pass early-closing bills in 1894 and 1895 were unsuccessful, but led to much public debate and a growth in support for early closing. Some shops were now granting a half-day off, for some assistants on Wednesday and for others on Saturday. Employers claimed this caused confusion, and used it as an argument against granting the half-day.

Emma helped Frank McDonnell in his successful campaign for the Fortitude Valley parliamentary seat in 1896. He attempted to introduce an early-closing bill, but met with organised opposition from the Traders Association. In 1898, legislation in other colonies met with success, and was not followed by the dire fall-off of trade predicted. Local traders then had a change of heart, and legislation for early closing was finally passed in 1900, to operate from Federation Day, 1 January 1901.
Four

A disgrace to our common humanity

And cause I have to sorrow, in a land so young and fair,
To see upon those faces stamped the marks of Want and Care;
I look in vain for traces of the fresh and fair and sweet
In sallow, sunken faces that are drifting through the street.

Henry Lawson, 1888

As well as examining conditions in the retail industry, the Royal Commission, which sat from 25 February 1891 to 15 June 1891, heard testimony from workers in manufacturing and service industries such as hotels and restaurants. The commissioners inspected shops, factories and workshops in Brisbane and Ipswich, and heard evidence from local doctors and from the Brisbane City Inspector, Mr Lee Bryce.

The commissioners called the period one of "great commercial depression and general stagnation of business in all trades", during which, they said, "many manufacturers and other employers have necessarily reduced their expenditure by working half time and in some cases reducing staff". It is not surprising, then, that fear of victimisation prevented many workers from coming forward; some women witnesses, however, were able to remain anonymous. When it was raised at the second session that some females might prefer to give their evidence to the women commissioners only, no witnesses took up the offer.

Although evidence showed that both men and women worked long hours for low pay, the women's conditions were clearly much worse than the men's. "Women and girls are working in factories the same number of hours as men whilst the wages paid them barely reach half the amount earned by their strong co-workers", concluded the commissioners. They found that wages were paid irregularly, with girls very often having to go for weeks without pay, and even then not receiving the correct amount. Women workers had nowhere to rest, often nowhere to eat their lunch except beside the machines, and rarely any place to hang
their clothes other than in the closet or on a nail in a corner partitioned off by a curtain. Testimonies and inspections of workplaces again and again exposed exploitation, overcrowding, and insanitary, dirty and dangerous conditions. In some cases the conditions were so bad that they polluted the homes of people living next to the workplaces.

A boot factory near the railway line in Brunswick Street, Fortitude Valley was responsible for an oppressive, suffocating smell in the area: confined in one yard were its horse stables, and its dogs, poultry, cow and calf. The workers got a whiff of fresh air only when a westerly wind was blowing.

There were continual references to the debilitating effects of Brisbane's summer heat on workers' health, particularly in confined spaces or under gaslight. Windows were inadequate, often too high or too small in buildings built to suit an English climate.

Mr Bryce drew the commissioners' attention to the discovery by Cribb and Foote of Ipswich that continual sickness in girls had been caused by gas jets burning on the floor below; when night work stopped, the girls' health improved. Evidence continually pointed to an urgent need for factory legislation as, on day after day, testimony exposed the inhuman working conditions. But the commission was equally revealing of the attitudes of male workers and their unions to their female fellow workers.

Of the women commissioners, Elizabeth Edwards and Leontine Cooper asked the most questions. At first Mrs Edwards tended to concentrate on moral issues — whether girls went to church, or would keep company with girls who did wrong. She was surprised to learn that a father could not afford to send his children to Sabbath school because it "cost something" to clothe children well. As the commission progressed, she began to delve into the question of women's rights. She was particularly persistent in her questioning of the Government Printer (Mr J. Beal). While the private employers were inclined to hedge on equal-pay questions, Beal flatly stated, "You cannot put a woman to do a man's work". Pressed by Elizabeth Edwards on whether the girls would get the same pay if they did the same quality and quantity of work, he remained stubborn: "They could not do the work ... it is a physical impossibility. There are certain things which women can do
and certain things which they cannot." Elizabeth Edwards became more persistent, and Beal more evasive:

*If a woman was to read as well as a man do you think she should be paid as well as a reader?* That is a question I scarcely care about answering, for the reason I have never had any lady readers. *But as a matter of justice should they be paid the same if they did the same work?* I have never had any experience of women in that respect, and therefore I cannot answer.

In questioning Alfred Allen, a Quaker member of the New South Wales Select Committee, about possible solutions to poor work conditions for women, Mrs Edwards revealed her personal interest in female suffrage:

*Do you think women’s suffrage would alter the matter?* Yes. I think it would if you could get rid of the clergy. They have too much influence with the women.

*Don’t you think that women are self reliant enough to stand up for their own and their husbands’ rights?* I don’t think so yet. A minority might be, I wish they were a majority.

Leontine Cooper also continually raised feminist questions. After listening to John Beck, a tailor, complain that the employment of tailoresses and sweating was the cause of the tailor’s reduction in wages, she asked:

*Would you have any objections to women workers having the same prices as men?* No; we would encourage them all we can.

*Why did you not let them enter your union?* We would be glad to get them.

*I have been informed that you would never allow them to join your union?* No; we have encouraged them.

*Then you would allow women to work if they did not undersell you?* Yes.

Mr Beck’s replies hardly coincided with Mrs Cooper’s own experience and she must have wondered why women workers had had to be organised into their own unions.

As well as asking questions on women’s right to equal pay, the two women also asked questions about the right of women to equal work itself. Elizabeth Edwards to Mr P. McLachlan, a compositor:

*Why do you think that women should not enter a trade?* Because I
don't think it is a suitable trade for women.

Are you aware that there are female compositors both in England and America? Yes.

And printing offices conducted by women? Yes I know that.

Can you tell the Commission, then, why you object to women entering the trade? I have said already that the trade is not suitable for them. There are other trades at which women could be better employed, and the printing trade should be kept exclusively for males.

Leontine Cooper picked up the questioning.

Can you give any good reason why a woman should not be allowed to earn her living at anything she is capable of doing? I don't see why women should not be allowed, but I don't think they are capable of doing the work in the printing trade properly, or else they would be paid the same as men.

Is it fair that men should keep women out of the trade, and compel them to enter businesses which are very poorly paid? If the men did not do that, they would have their trade as poorly paid as the trade to which women go at present.

Then you think it is fairer that women should starve than that men should starve? I see no necessity for anyone to starve.

She later accused Mr McLachlan of advocating protection of men against women. Of Charles Harley (R.S. Hews & Co Printery Works), who said he considered girls would make good compositors because "they do at home", Elizabeth Edwards asked:

Is there any jealousy of women's labour? Not among intelligent men. There is always a certain section in every trade that objects to any innovation.

You are aware that in Queensland there are many women who must earn their living, and are anxious to be self reliant; do you think that the printing trade is one of the trades that would do for women? Yes the lighter parts of the trade. Reading especially would be a very good department for females; and in a good many businesses they employ them at small machines.

French polisher John Gregg, secretary of the United Furniture Trade Union, revealed in his testimony that female french polishers were prevalent in North England but that there was only one in Brisbane. He also showed his feelings of male superiority when Leontine Cooper asked:

Would you admit girl apprentices? I do not know that the union would care about that. Women could hardly take the highest class work.
Miss Nixon, secretary of the Machinists Union and an employee of Hunters Boot Factory, gave a picture of life as a machinist. She told of girls, having to scrub down their benches and clean their own machines. She knew of girls who had been caught by their hair in the machines; these machines, she considered, should be boxed for safety. Because the dye in the leather damaged their clothes they had to change before starting work, but the only place available was behind the door because the change room was overcrowded. Although they had an hour for lunch, they had to eat it beside the machines. She was resigned to these poor conditions, stating that they had got “used to” eating at machines; just as they had got “used to” stumbling up a flight of stairs that were so dark you had to feel your way. The company had a policy of “no work, no pay” — similar to most others — so there was no pay for public holidays and no sick pay. Only girls were employed as machinists, but there were men in the machinists’ room; the girls disapproved of their presence and would prefer that the men were not there. Commissioner Glassey asked:

*From your knowledge of the boot trade, generally, if a man were employed at your work be would receive more wages than you are getting?* Oh, yes, he would.

Miss Nixon told of a time when she was out of work for a week while outworkers were getting plenty of work. Some women left the factory to do outwork instead, but found it to be lower paid, forcing them to work longer hours. The union then successfully campaigned to force employers in the industry to restrict “homework”. Asked Commissioner Dalrymple:

*Would the women who had to abandon home work count that a blessing?* Some had husbands to keep them and some could come inside.

The union seems to have overlooked the fact that this stand, by denying women breadwinners the right to work, would cause hardship to many families.

Miss Nixon at one stage found herself being interrogated by her employer, Commissioner Hunter.

*Do you think it fair that employers should have to pay for holidays?*
Yes.
Then followed a few leading questions.

*Are you fairly satisfied with your employer?* Yes.
*You say you don’t think the wages sufficient for you?* — *would you like to get more?* Yes.
*And if you got more, *— would still like to get more?* —

She refused to answer questions about union fees of whether the union was affiliated with the ALF or the Shearers’ Union. (The Shearers’ Strike was in progress at the time.) Other girls were tight-lipped about the Women’s Union. An official of the Boot Trades Union admitted that he had never entered the machinists’ room to investigate women’s working conditions.

The clothing trade, notorious for its abuses of its employees, received much attention from the commission. John Beck, tailor, spoke on behalf of the Tailors’ Union because they “couldn’t get many to give evidence”. He complained that the increase in the use of machines over the past seven years had injured the trade by reducing wages. Asked if he attributed this to the number of females now employed, he replied, “The females and the sweating system that is carried on”. His testimony revealed that tailors were fighting a losing battle against loss of status: women now machined the work that was previously done by men, and it grieved him that the customers could not distinguish between hand finish and machine work. He told how workshops continued to charge the higher hand-sewn prices by disguising the fact that work was being machined by tailoresses: at Pike’s workroom, men went in by the front door, and girls by the back; advertisements for tailors read, “First class coat hands Pike Brothers” and for tailoresses, “Tailoresses wanted, 30 Queen Street”.

He said the union no longer referred to female labour as “competition”, seeing it rather as underselling. He considered that paying a “proper price to females” was the solution, but said that if he had his way, there would be no females in the tailoring trade. Beck also revealed that women received only a six-month apprenticeship and so were untrained and unskilled compared with men who took from four to five years to become journeyman tailors.

The question of sweating received a lot of attention, with John Beck stating that to avoid sweating the union had tried to get all
Excerpt from Emma Miller's testimony to the Royal Commission into Shops, Factories and Workshops, 1891.

work to be done inside, but "no notice was taken of it by the masters". Solomon Rosenthal, master tailor, produced a novel excuse for sweating when he accused nine out of ten tailors of being drunkards. This was why the masters had to send their work out to sweaters who were "respectable sober men". 13

When called to give her evidence, Emma Miller drew on her experiences in Manchester and in Brisbane. She gave her trade as a "gentleman's white shirntaker" and told the commission that for ten years she had worked for most of the shops in Brisbane and that she had worked for ten years previously in England. She took the work home and could earn thirty shillings a week working twelve hours a day when paid at the rate of thirty-six shillings a dozen for the best white shirts.

Is the price the same now as it used to be? No, it is not the same now. That is what has brought me here today.

How much has the price fallen? About a fortnight ago I saw an adver-
Proud to be a Rebel

tisement in the Telegraph for a good white shirt hand, and I made application, not that I required the work, but I wanted the information. I went and they offered me 1s 3d each for the best white shirts; that is 15s a dozen. 

As asked by Commissioner McDonnell if the shirts were hand sewn, she explained that they were machined and finished by hand. Further questioning centred on the availability of work.

Are there many persons engaged in the same trade as yourself? No. Do many of the shopkeepers give much material out to be made up? I cannot tell, but I know I had an offer to open a shirt business for one of the first shops in town, either on wages or I could go in and take the room and make the best I could out of it.

Would you be inclined to do so after giving evidence here to-day? I would do so; that would not prevent me.

She said she didn’t know of many sweaters in her trade, but knew of some in others: “I have not taken the trouble to find out how many there are in my trade, but I will find out”. She didn’t think that anyone could live decently on the reduced rates being paid to shirrmakers by some sweaters — she certainly could not. Prices had begun to drop two years previously — there had been an eighty per cent drop in working men’s shirts and pyjamas.

Emma was also questioned by Frank McDonnell.

What used you to get for making pyjamas? 2s6d. for one class, and 3s for another. The very best were 3s per suit.

She said she had been offered nine shillings a dozen when she applied for the job advertised in the Telegraph and two shillings and sixpence for regatta shirts which had previously been twelve shillings a dozen.

How many regatta shirts with collars could you make in a week? I never did that work here, but in the old country I could make half a dozen in a day.

How many hours per day? Twelve.

So that in six days you could make three dozen? Yes. I could not make more, and I know I am quick.

She told the commissioners that she could make not more than a dozen white shirts in a week. As there were thirteen and a half dozen buttonholes to be worked by hand in a dozen white shirts, she thought she would have to work fourteen hours a day to make a dozen. After prompting from Frank McDonnell, she revealed that she had entered a competition with Mountcastles and won
"first order of merit" for white-shirt making. She said that she didn’t think there were any other women competent enough to earn as much as she did, because they “never served their time in the trade”: in a factory “one girl would do the machine work, another the button-holes, and another would finish, and the material would be all ready cut out”. She considered it would be to everybody’s advantage if they were to learn the whole trade, as she had done in Manchester. She had been told by Mr Chapman and Mr Finney that she was the only one in Brisbane with the skill to both cut out and fit. But, she said, there were plenty with the ability if they were able to obtain full training.

Can you give us any reason why the rates have been reduced so much? I do not think the rates have been reduced by the principal shops. It is the sweaters that reduce the prices. They go to the shops and offer to do the work at so much less than anyone else. They take it home and get girls to work for them.

Asked what she thought the result of the sweating business would be, Emma replied,

I think if a stop is not put to it we shall be in the same position as they are in the old country. I was always afraid of that; but I have worked for over ten years for one shopkeeper and have never been given less than I asked. It is the sweaters who have run down the regular workers; they know nothing about the trade, and they live by other people’s work. I could have done that years ago and made a fortune.

She said the sweaters owned factories as well as giving out work; they paid by the piece, and gave a very poor price: “I do not like piecework; it is not good for anyone”.

Commissioner Thomas White then took over the questioning.

Do you think it would be a fair thing to pass a law to prevent you taking work home? I do, I think if all work was done in the shops it would be much better for the working classes.

Emma would have been aware, however, that workers with children were not free to enter the workshops, but her testimony does not suggest any solution to their problem. She showed complete confidence in her own ability when asked what she would do if a shop didn’t have full work for her: “That would be a consideration. If I could not get work at one shop to supply me wholly, I would work inside and manage the shop.”
“No. I am not a sweater”, she indignantly replied when asked if she could be considered a sweater because for five years she had employed a girl. She had made no profit from the girl and often gave her more than she had worked for and she considered such a suggestion to be unfair. Although she herself had worked a twelve-hour day, her assistant worked from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and was paid fifteen shillings a week. Any profit, Emma explained, came from her own work, not the girl’s.

Master tailor Thomas Beattie later told the commission: “You have a good representation of sweating in what Mrs E. Miller told you the other day. I endorse every word that woman said; it is perfectly true to my knowledge.”

When the commissioners inspected Mountcastle & Sons, Men’s Mercer, in Albert Street, Commissioner Neill asked if the girls learnt all the different parts of the trade. The foreman replied: “They are taught the whole trade, and I see that Miss Miller stated that she was the only shirtmaker in Brisbane, but every girl in this room can make shirts”.

*Can they cut out?* No; that is a separate trade altogether. I find the colonial girls work just as well as new chums.

Further evidence revealed that employers paid girl “apprentices” nothing for up to twelve months and then paid a mere two shillings and sixpence a week which meant that it could be from two to five years before they could “live decently” on their wage. The more unscrupulous employers could secure a continual supply of unpaid labour by dismissing apprentices after their time and engaging others.

The Commission found that although employers had said fourteen years was the youngest age at which they employed children, in “numerous cases” children as young as eleven years of age were working the same long hours as adult workers. During the inspection of Hunter’s Boot Factory, a girl was asked whether the work she was doing was very hard. “Oh, my word, yes”, was her reply. An eleven-year-old girl worked in a cordial factory during summer and went to school in winter. Some people in their testimony expressed concern about the moral aspects of boys’ sharing accommodation with adult males in butcher shops, fearing they would learn to use bad language, and to gamble and drink. The
boys had to sleep on the premises so that they could deliver meat early enough for breakfast. The Boot Trades Union had campaigned for a reduction in the number of boy apprentices because, as a cheap and in many cases unpaid labour force, they were replacing adult males. The exposure of the very young boys in this industry had been one of the factors leading to the establishment of the commission.

Two little girls discovered selling newspapers were only seven and nine years old, and were orphans. The paper sellers had their own form of mateship and principles. A young paper seller, Richard Pike, was questioned about the girls by Chairman Moreton.

*Where do they sleep?* I don’t believe in telling you that. We object to pimping on one another. The youngest kid who sells papers would not tell you that.  

There were a hundred paper sellers in Brisbane aged seven to seventy-three; of these four were girls and two were women.

Leontine Cooper wrote regular reports for *Dawn*, giving her opinions on the Commission’s revelations. The commissioners agreed to her suggestion that a letter be sent to employers asking them to ascertain by testing the number of young workers who could not read or write. In this their aim was to assess the necessity of enforcing the compulsory clauses of the *Education Act of 1875*.

*bThe commission’s reports*

The commission’s first report, signed by all the women commissioners, Dr Booth, and Messrs McDonnell, Glassey, Stewart, Crawford and Moreton, made some worthwhile recommendations in the interests of workers. It recommended that no child under the age of fourteen be employed and that the compulsory clauses of the state’s *Education Act of 1875* be enforced. The commissioners advocated written agreements for apprentices, with employers bound to impart a thorough knowledge of their trade, and that apprentices should have the right to attend technical classes in working hours. The commissioners also recommended the implementation of an eight-hour workday and the weekly payment of wages; the boxing of machinery; improved sanitation and closet facilities;
and the appointment of male and female factory inspectors to see that working conditions were improved and maintained. They also decided that the Government, by its system of inviting tenders, was keeping alive the sweating system — the lower the accepted tender, the smaller the amount earned by the worker — and recommended government-controlled workshops. The report included a special statement about the injurious and "permanent evil effect" on women's constitutions of the continuous use of the treadle machine, especially when working with heavy material.

The second report drew attention to the limited number of occupations open to women and blamed the "excessive competition for employment for causing low rates of wages to prevail". It suggested that "all light labour capable of being performed by females, such as telegraphy, type-setting, and sale of stamps and other postal matters, and routine clerical work in Government departments be thrown open to women, and that they be given preference when practicable".

Dr Booth added a rider to the second report in which he called for the prohibition of asphalt floors in workshops, stating continual standing on them was harming women's feet. He recommended that employers be compelled to improve the shocking insanitary conditions and regularly cleanse water vessels. He concluded by saying that:

Most people would agree that a great alteration is necessary in a condition of things under which to cite one instance, one woman with two young children to support is obliged to sit alongside a foul smelling urinal from morning till night washing trays for 12 shillings a week and is afraid to complain of the offensive surroundings for fear of losing her miserable pittance.

In spite of the Royal Commission's exposure of inhuman working conditions, nothing changed. In 1893 Frank McDonnell drew attention to the fact that there were girls in the tailoring trade who could not earn enough for the necessities of life and that there were workrooms near Queen Street where large numbers of girls were huddled together in filthy and crowded rooms. He was accused of grossly inaccurate accusations, but the Brisbane Courier carried out its own investigations and found that
sweating was still rampant, that overcrowding and a lack of ventilation persisted, and that many girls received only half an hour for lunch. (Employers claimed that if they gave the girls an hour they would “spend it in a manner fatiguing to themselves, and a disadvantage to those that employ them”.21

It was not until 1896 that genuine moves for factory legislation were made. Again exposure of the exploitation of women dominated the Legislative Assembly debate, and women in the tailoring industry were found to be the most abused. It was found that less than five per cent of tailoring was done on factory premises, the bulk of it being farmed out to sweaters, many of whom had arrived from the south. They employed women at starvation rates and then skipped town without even paying that meagre amount, leaving the women destitute. John Hoolan, a Northern member of parliament, said that when he had first heard of firms and others building up “their businesses and their position in society by sweating seamstresses and little girls” he thought “it was a yarn, that it was too monstrous a thing to believe that anyone professing to be a respectable man and the father of a family, and holding a prominent position in the church to which he belonged, should try to keep up an appearance before the world by making a few shillings and pence out of the sweat of tailoresses and seamstresses”.22 On inquiry, however, he had found it to be a fact and began to take up the cause of the sweated women workers. Concerned members were angered when conservative politicians ridiculed stories of exploitation and even suggested that women did not have to take up sewing, they could become domestics. John Cross replied. “If the hon. gentleman knew as much about domestic service as I do he would know that the position of domestic servant is becoming more and more a drudgery and cruel white slavery of a contemptible character”.23 Attention was drawn to the comment of the *Evening Observer* in 1893: “[Our investigations have disclosed] the existence of sweating, whether we take the technical or the common-sense meaning of the term — to a degree which disgraces our common humanity”.24 Frank McDonnell drew further on the *Evening Observer*’s report to illustrate sweating in Brisbane:

One poor woman pleaded for a little consideration: but the shirtman
sympathetically said, 'My good woman, we do not ask you to sew these shirts. Leave them by all means. We can get plenty who are only too glad of the work.' Human life at such hands is a commodity worth so much a yard; and the teaching of the Great Master is to them delightful on the Sabbath, but impossible of application on week days."

Emma Miller was overjoyed when Queensland’s *Factories and Shops Act* was passed in 1896. It came into force on 1 January 1897. Three factory inspectors were appointed, including Edith Smith who paid detailed attention to the employment conditions of women and children. She soon found that the Act was not being adhered to and became exasperated at having to remonstrate continually with employers about their dirty premises, and wondered whether they became employers because they were not clean or whether they were not clean because they were employers. One of the main culprits was Thomas Brown & Sons, a firm notorious for its callous treatment of women employees. It was fined for having dirty premises, so instead of cleaning them before work, as others did, it began its cleaning at 4 p.m. Dust swirled around the women and settled in their hair, clothes and lungs.

The *Worker* reported that even though seats were provided, as required by law, for shopgirls, it took a "plucky and independent worker to brace the uplifted eyebrow; the pale smile, the fussy correction, the half veiled sneer contained in ‘Resting, Miss A?’ After such experiences girls were inclined to stand until their limbs were ‘too tired to even ache consistently’."\(^{25}\)

Edith Smith was particularly concerned at the excessive overtime being worked, especially in millinery, dressmaking and jam factories where some girls still worked 60 to 80 hours per week though the Act specified a limit of 48 hours.

She worried about girls arriving at work with only sufficient money for their bus fare home: "‘During the day the order is given to work overtime. There is probably no tea money given, consequently the only alternative is to get what miserable refreshment may be possible with the amount . . . and walk home or do without and ride home, and the occupier benefits by the extra work filched from the employee who is unable to insist on fair treatment.’."\(^{26}\) She suggested that if the employer wished his staff to work overtime he should pay them well for it, "‘and it seems
also equally unreasonable that, when overtime is required to be worked, all the sacrifice should be on the part of the employee, who in many cases gets nothing out of it”.

Although the Act forbade it, Miss Smith discovered many children under fourteen working and realised it was not always the employers’ fault. It was a quandary for her, for to enforce the law and have the children dismissed, would cause hardship to those families dependent on their children’s meagre wages. The law, therefore, was not always enforced.

The early reports from the inspectors reflect their humane concern for the workers, but later reports became more statistical. Yet their unemotional pages still revealed the need for humanitarian activity in the interests of working women and children.
Five

Freedom's ardent and consuming flame

The price of wool was falling in eighteen-ninety-one,
The men who owned the acres, saw something must be done;
"We will break the shearer's union, and show we're masters still;
And they'll take the terms we give them,
or we'll find the men who will!"

Helen Palmer

While Emma Miller, May Jordan and others were working to establish the women's union the bushworkers were acting to strengthen their unions. William Guthrie Spence formed a Shearers' Union in Ballarat in 1886, and by the following year it had developed into the Australian Shearers' Union. Unionism came as a type of religion to the bushworkers who were desperately in need of a solution to their shocking working and living conditions, and they were among the early adherents of the ALF.

Australia was dependent on its rural industry, with wool the basis of its prosperity. The boom period of 1880-1890 was followed by a recession, due to a steady decline in world wool prices combined with a slowing-down of loan funds from the London money market. Unemployment grew, and social unrest in the form of strikes in many industries was prevalent. Pastoralists, to counteract their drop in profits, sought to reverse concessions gained by the workers during the boom period. But the workers were in no mood to give up their gains without a struggle. The wages and conditions they had achieved had been determined by collective bargaining between unions and squatters; but the squatters now wished to resort to individual negotiations — freedom of contract — a scheme designed to break the strength of bush unions. At the same time, the pastoralists, seeing the cane farmers
prospering with Melanesian labour on slave wages and conditions, introduced cheap Chinese labour.

Throughout the developed world, workers were seeking solutions to their shrinking wages and conditions and socialism seemed to many to be the answer. The hard core of the labour movement at the time, including William and Ernie Lane, Albert Hinchcliffe (secretary of the ALF), David (Dave) Bowman, Emma Miller and Bob Ross, regarded themselves as socialists. William Lane continued to be the most influential rebel, raising workers’ consciousness through the pages of the Worker spurring them to action. He organised debating societies and reading clubs, and produced racial pamphlets. He had an enthusiastic band of converts in the bushworkers, who began to see the sense in united action rather than isolated skirmishes. Every camp was said to have a copy of his bible, Bellamy’s Looking Backward, to guide them on a socialist path, and workers eagerly awaited their regular copies of the Worker. Side by side with the growing militancy of the 1890s was a developing nationalism — a desire to build a new nation devoid of the mistakes of the older nations, a true independent democracy of liberty, equality and fraternity, happiness and security for all. As the shearers moved from shed to shed they discussed their readings, and debated the theories put forward as solutions for the ills of society together with the radical ideas being preached by William Lane. They developed a close-knit mateship that, along with the spirit of the developing nationalism, was captured in the poems and short stories of Henry Lawson, then living in Brisbane where he was for a time on the staff of the Boomerang and contributed to the Worker. This mateship, however, did not extend to the Chinese workers: the shearers opposed their presence as a threat to jobs, showing the same prejudice and hostility as the industrial workers were showing to women workers. William Lane helped fan this short-sighted racist attitude which led to the denial of union membership to Chinese workers, and later to the labour movement’s White Australia Policy.

The insistence of capital on opposing trade unionism and reducing shearing rates through freedom of contract and the refusal of the newly formed Pastoralist Organisation to discuss the matter with union representatives, led to one of the first great conflicts
between labour and capital in Australia. Some have said that through their bitter defiance the shearers brought Queensland close to revolution. The strikers, some said to be armed, formed camps and flew over them their own flags. They held regular fiery meetings, denouncing not only the pastoralists but also the Government which had provided police and soldiers to break the strike and give protection to non-union labour.²

The enthusiastic spirit that had developed at the outset of the strike spread to other workers, particularly the local domestics who made up the majority of working women in the area. The North Queensland Carriers’ Union supported the formation of the Hughenden Women Workers Association, the strongest union outside Brisbane. Its membership comprised the seventy women working in the area and secured considerable wage increases for servants. Both a Cooks’ Union and a Servant Girls’ Union were formed in Barcaldine. Mary Kewley, daughter of the secretary of the local Shearers’ Union was elected secretary of the Blackall Servant Girls’ Union. This union won a twenty-five per cent increase in wages for hotel workers, and servants in private homes, possibly the first victory for girls thus employed. The unions listed employers who were bad payers, who locked up the food and starved the girls or who had bad tempers and threw things at them.

Womens unions in Brisbane, coastal towns and the west helped organise relief for striking workers and their families, and Mary Gilmore helped Queensland strikers on the run. Emma Miller became involved in Brisbane activities in support of the strike and often spoke at meetings.

Women also took a stand against men considered to be scabs, judged by whether they stood by union rules or betrayed a mate. To scab (or “rat”) was considered a great crime earning lasting rejection by striking workers; lack of solidarity meant less in the pay packet, less to eat, less to send home to wives and children.

At country balls women refused to dance with scabs long after the strike was over. Barmaids refused them drinks and waitresses refused them meals. In the History of the AWU, W.G. Spence writes of Martha Davis, “a very fine young woman” who was incensed when a coach load of scabs booked into the hotel where
she worked, and gave them such a large dose of purgative in their "tucker" that they were unable to work for a week. "May good fortune attend her. Scabs deserve no better", he wrote.  

When strike leaders were unjustly charged with sedition and conspiracy, two women, Mrs Sutton and Mrs Roach faced trial in Rockhampton with the arrested unionists. They were charged with using abusive language to the police and gathering stones for the men to throw. Roach frankly admitted using the words "blacklegs" and "scabs" and explained, "Your Worship, I know no different. That is what I've heard them called ever since they came up here." With feigned innocence she added, "I thought it was their proper names". When the magistrate fined each woman two pounds or two months in jail, Roach boldly retorted that she was destitute, and the magistrate told her she would have to go to jail. "Who will take care of my children whilst I am away?" she asked. She needn't have worried, however; sympathisers paid both women's fines before they had left the courtroom.

Twelve of the strike leaders were sentenced to three years' jail on St Helena Island, and Emma Miller joined the campaign agitating for their early release. With Mabel Lane, she organised regular visits to the jail to keep up the prisoners' spirits, and was involved in setting up a Prisoners' Relief Fund.

The strike caused disillusionment with liberal parliamentarians, previously regarded as friends of labour. Premier Griffith, who had passed the law legalising the formation of trade unions and had popularised Marxist economics through an article in the Boomerang, had now shown himself willing to shoot down striking workers. He had been responsible for the arrest and jailing of strike leaders, and could no longer be trusted. The dispatch of police and armed troops to oppose the striking shearers and to act as escorts to "free labourers" had placed the Government in the position of an agency of the pastoralists. The eventual defeat of the Shearers' Strike convinced workers that the road to emancipation was through parliamentary representation as well as mass action.

The 1889 Intercolonial Trades and Labour Congress had accepted the findings of the Trades and Labour Council's parliamentary committee: "Labour must take its part in the Government of the country, and the formation of a Labor Party in the near future
will become an absolute necessity". Then in August 1890 William Lane persuaded the ALF Provincial Council to adopt the People's Parliamentary Platform for the attainment of socialism. So the idea of parliamentary representation for Australia's working people was not new, but the series of disputes, particularly the Shearers' Strike made it more acceptable.

As in the other colonies, there had been earlier attempts in Queensland to form political labour organisations such as the Workers' Political Reform Association, the Working Men's Parliamentary Association and the Queensland Social Democratic Federation. All had been honestly designed to bring a better quality of life to working people and as Joe Collings later wrote, "Some of the organisations succeeded, others accomplished little of value, but always the motive behind was sincere and honest and clean, and Emma Miller was an active figure in them".

The ALF sent organisers all over Queensland to form labour leagues. These leagues merged with the Bushmen's Parliamentary Association to become the Workers' Political Organisation (WPO), the forerunner of the Labour (later Labor) Party. Emma Miller was a foundation member and was among the first women to join. She assisted the formation of other branches and in later years, as a tribute to her loyal and constant activity, she was made a life member. Of Emma's life at the time it was said: "The tiny spark of freedom implanted in her nature so early burst into an ardent and consuming flame under the open skies of the Southern Cross, and her whole life was given up to the cause she loved with a devotion unparalleled in our history".

Emma firmly believed that the foundation of the Labour Party was laid during the stirring '91 strike. The date of Queensland's first May Day marches, 1 May 1891 (in Barcaldine and Ipswich), is celebrated as the anniversary of its formation. A gum tree under which strikers met in Barcaldine has become known as the Tree of Knowledge, a symbol of the principles, ideals and objectives discussed beneath its shade. Some date the formation of the Labour Party from the date of its first Labour-in-Politics Convention - August 1892. It is difficult, however, to allocate a specific time as it "had no clear-cut beginning, and in fact, it existed before it was founded".
At a by-election in 1892, Queensland's first endorsed Labour candidate, strike leader and shearer T.J. Ryan, was elected MLA for Barcoo and became the first representative of organised labour to any parliament in the world. To celebrate this victory, a Clermont nurse, Clara Jones, hoisted a red flag over the Muttaburra Hospital and subsequently lost her job.

Meanwhile the workers' hero, William Lane, was involved in the pursuit of another dream. He believed that Bellamy's cooperative commonwealth of peace and equality could become a reality, and decided to establish an experimental socialist settlement in Paraguay — New Australia, as it was later to be named. Disillusioned and bitter at their defeat in their first major conflict with the employers and swayed by Lane's enthusiasm, many of Australia's best workers and unionists were attracted by this scheme, and with 209 supporters he sailed from Sydney Harbour on the Royal Tar on 16 July 1893. Mary Gilmore, later to become a Dame in recognition of her place in Australian literature, was affected by Lane's personal magnetism and shared his belief that socialist solutions would cure the problems of poverty and inequality. She later joined his Utopian expedition and became a teacher at the settlement.

Emma Miller was not interested in joining Lane and his followers, even though the idea of "living socialism" had its appeal. Instead, she joined Sir Charles Lilley, Wallace Nelson and others in their disapproval of his move. She believed that Lane had opted out of the struggle instead of remaining in Queensland to continue the fight for improved conditions and to realise his aim of "socialism in our time". She deplored the loss of many of the colony's finest labour leaders and continued her own tireless struggle for human freedom. In its formative years, the Labour Party with its high ideals and passionate, sympathetic involvement in the lives and destinies of the working people, included many people like Emma Miller — staunch champions of the working class with genuine working class principles and philosophy.

Four months later, in November 1893, Queensland's first political prisoners were released from St Helena Island. They arrived in Brisbane on the Otter which berthed at Queen's Wharf at 9 p.m.
to be greeted by crowds of people who had begun to gather from 4 p.m.

Emma joined the throng of people who proudly supported the men as they marched through city streets to the lodging house of Mrs Snell in Upper Edward Street. "The happiest day of my life", she declared. That night she attended the welcome-home meeting addressed by R. King and A. Fisher, MLA. The *Telegraph* made mention of the "many ladies present". A placard featured the slogan 'Freedom without Dishonour' embellished with a pair of real but rusty leg irons, and everyone joined in singing "The Ballot is the Thing" to the tune of 'The Wearin' o' the Green'. Ex-prisoner, George Taylor told the gathering he had heard that another big strike was looming because squatters were talking of reducing shearing rates. (He was right. Another strike, more bitter if possible than that of 1891, began in 1894.) Other speakers were applauded when they said, in the spirit of the times, that a "socialist republic was the true goal of Australian labour" and that "trade unionism had been the baby; political unionism was to be the giant".

With the worsening of the depression in 1892, times became critical for the trade unions: membership dropped off as unemployment grew, and union funds became exhausted. The Women's Union, along with the much stronger male unions, fell by the wayside. Men left the cities in droves to "hump their blueys" along the dusty country tracks in a depressing hunt for non-existent work. Wives were left behind to cope as best they could, too proud at first to accept charity, but later forced by hunger and deprivation to forget their pride. Organisations such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and welfare groups assisted in practical ways, but found their funds often inadequate to meet the constant demands of the distressed. Public meetings, hell-fire preachers, political rallies and indignation meetings attracted larger crowds than usual during depression times, as people sought answers to their impoverished conditions. According to Jessie Ackerman, an American journalist and WCTU organiser who visited Australia at various times between 1889 and 1912, "The noise, shouting, and laughter all ap-
peal to him, to say nothing of the quick and clever retorts which roll freely from the average stump orator. Women, too, enter into the spirit of it with great zest; not because they have the slightest idea what it all means, but it is an opportunity to give vent to an abnormal desire to manifest." But Emma Miller and her friends were very aware of what it was all about and often took to the stump themselves.

The indignation suffered by families whose "breadwinner" was unemployed was demonstrated in a report in the Courier on 19 March 1892. It gave a lengthy report of an apparently spontaneous demonstration of women.

Families had been issued with ration tickets that could be exchanged for meagre provisions. These were distributed by the Brisbane Relief Board through police stations. Showing a lack of consideration for the women, the Government suddenly moved the distribution to a central position — the Labour Bureau. By mid-morning more than three hundred women had assembled and neither the premises nor the staff proved able to handle the numbers; "the passageways became crowded by women — old and young — many bearing babes in arms, some of whom could not have been more than two or three months old, if that". Fearing a crush, the staff closed the doors, forcing women to wait in "the hot tropical sunshine of Adelaide Street until at last human endurance could sustain it no longer, and a great number of those present determined to interview the Colonial Secretary". They invaded his ground-floor offices and "in loud tones" demanded to see him. The Secretary, though, was away on holidays and the under Secretary interviewed "a woman who volunteered herself as a champion of her sex". In the meantime, his assistant attempted to interview the remainder. Children were crying, an elderly woman fainted on the pavement, tempers were at boiling point.

The Courier's reporter commented that it was "apparent at once the women had good cause for complaint" since in many cases their husbands had been induced to go to the country to look for work, leaving their wives and families behind them.

Recognising that the situation at the Labour Bureau needed urgent attention, the Under Secretary told those who had stormed his
office to return to the Labour Bureau and he would follow them there later. In response, "respectable looking women, with anger in their voices and tears in their eyes, said bitterly that it was not charity they wanted, but work for themselves or their husbands".

Finally accepting that the Labour Bureau was inadequate, the officials suggested that the Immigration Depot at Kangaroo Point be used and arranged for the Council to ferry the women over free of charge, thus moving the "distressing scene" from the sight of the town. The Courier journalist wrote sympathetically of the "young women on whose faces were written shame and distress at their situation and palpable want", adding "Such a gathering has surely never before assembled in the streets of Brisbane".

During this time of depression women workers were the most exploited because of their alienation from the working-class movement with which they should have had common cause. The number actually unemployed is difficult to discover because it was assumed that a woman would have a family to fall back on. The Queensland Government Labour Bureau Report for 1893 shows that there were 86 applicants for five positions as female domestic and 356 applications for nine positions as cook. The working-class wife was in an equally difficult position. She had to make do with her husband's inadequate wage (if indeed he had a wage) and suffered both emotional and physical strain as she fought for her family's survival. She suffered the indignity of having to seek credit from the grocer, butcher or baker, and often had to pawn items in order to keep her family fed and healthy. Women's health suffered, for they often sacrificed their own well-being for that of their families.

Emma Miller became recognised as the labour movement's most dominant female figure and most vigorous propagandist. She was a behind-the-scenes power, upholding labour's bedrock principles and familiarly known as Mother Miller (mother of the Labour Party). She was very proud of this title of respect and was also "justly proud of the fact that she had been privileged to play a prominent part in the moulding of our [Labour's] great movement".  

She was seen as a unique and appealing figure within the move-
ment, full of zeal and energy and intensity of purpose. She was said to know instinctively the right course to take in any situation and was continually proved correct. Emma Miller knew what she wanted and in organisations could be relied on always to be democratic and consistent; she had democracy in her blood. She was highly respected even by her political opponents.

Emma Miller was not regarded as an orator and was said to lack the gift of natural eloquence. She was unable to write a speech and on the rare occasions when she tried "failed to satisfy herself". Nevertheless, she was always in great demand as a speaker. One of her great admirers, Joe Collings, explained her secret:

Mrs Miller never "addressed" a meeting. She would "talk" to it heart-to-heart — sometimes she talked "at" it, but always her great earnestness, her wonderful sincerity, rather than the words spoken, were the things that told. Once she was announced, no matter how big the crowd, as soon as she stood forth, with her frail little right arm and hand extended in her well-known and characteristic way, and her by no means strong but always clear and incisive voice was heard all hearts seemed attuned to her appeal. The eyes of comrades would glint with the tear of approval and of joy, while in those of her bitterest opponent, even, would be the gleam of admiration for the courage, the energy, and the steadfastness . . .

She also appears to have had the gift of mimicry; she often gave humorous descriptions of incidents or illustrated her speeches with "spicy anecdotes from her long experience".

Emma continued to fear that the evils of poverty and oppression she had seen in England would spring up in Australia. She saw the Labour Party as a vehicle to resist such dangers and continued to devote her life in the interests of the "common people".
Six

One woman one vote

We had taken it for granted in a lordly sort of way,
That the running of the nation was a duty all our own.
That the right of rule was ours, and yours the duty to obey;
We to boss and you to listen while our stern decrees we spoke,
For we really couldn’t trust you with the franchise, womenfolk!

John Smith, 1903

In Australia, as in England, late-nineteenth-century women were beginning to break the cocoon that narrow prejudice and convention had woven around them. Throughout the developed world they received the label the “New Woman”. They queried their position in society, and demanded the right to higher education, and to enter the professions and other areas previously considered exclusive male domains. The New Woman became involved in sport and campaigned for dress reform against the tight lacing that restricted her movements and undermined her health. She petitioned against adverse legislation and began to make her presence felt, particularly when she demanded the right to vote.

In Queensland the inequalities of the electoral system were of great concern to all workers. Many of them were denied the vote while the wealthy had a vote in each electorate where they owned property. The Worker reported that this “plural voting” gave thousands of the well-to-do “from two to twenty apiece – [Premier] Morehead used to have 34”. Men also had to reside in an electorate for six months before qualifying for a vote. This discriminated against the itinerant worker, preventing many from being enfranchised, and causing those seeking work in another district, to have their names promptly removed from the roll. At the quarterly revision court at Isisford 150 names were once removed from the roll at the same time. For the male unions and for Labour men, one man-one vote took precedence over all other political reforms, and votes for women could wait.
Indeed, to suggest that women should and could share political power equally with men horrified not only most men of the 1890s but many women too. Women were still said to be “long of hair and short of wit” and incapable of concerning themselves with issues outside their rightful place, the home.

There were those, however, who disagreed, believing that conventions were not necessarily correct and that there was no reason that they shouldn’t be altered. Although the People’s Charter of Emma’s childhood hadn’t included female suffrage, the Chartists’ belief in electoral reform and mass action to achieve their demands still influenced her life. She believed that women could succeed in any field, given the opportunity, and that the social and economic burdens placed on women disadvantaged the whole human race. To her the vote was an important first step in achieving social justice for women. (More typical of women of the era, though, was the centenarian who, asked in 1988 for her views on changes to women’s status, replied: “We are human beings now, but at that time we just accepted the situation of being regarded as inferior.”)

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Harry Kelly’s reminiscences, Worker 1940 Jubilee Issue

Worker, May 1890

One woman one vote
An article in *Dawn* headed “Relative Value of Girl Babies” made reference to one suffragist’s commitment to equal rights for women that had begun following an experience as a seven-year-old. At that time her only brother, who was a year younger, had died and with “aching heart and throbbing brain” she stood unnoticed in a corner of the room, “where amid flowers and candles, he lay in his last sleep”. Silently, one by one, the mourners entered and gazed upon the still body and she heard them say, “What a pity it was the boy! The girl could have so easily been spared”. “Oh God I can never forget the anguish!” she wrote.4
Dame Mary Gilmore gives another insight into prevailing attitudes:

It was still believed that man had one less rib than a woman. On the authority of the Bible story of the Creation I heard this declared from the pulpit many a time.

People also said that a woman breathed differently from a man, and that "no female" could ever be a doctor or a lawyer, as only men could reason or had the faculty of logic. That woman was inferior was a regular Church doctrine; and man was constantly told to shun woman as the agent of the devil. As a matter of fact, in looking back, I think that men regarded the devil as a much less venal being than woman. The devil was male, and that made a lot of difference. "God made men kings and in likeness to Himself; but women were not made in the likeness of God and could only be queens as the daughters or wives of kings" would be thundered at us.

Australia's first women's suffrage society was formed in Melbourne in 1884 by Harriet Dugdale, but the first attempt to establish a suffrage movement in Brisbane was not recorded until 4 February 1889 when a meeting was held at the home of Mrs Elizabeth Edwards in Wickham Terrace. Hannah Chewings, present as a delegate from Adelaide, recommended that a Women's Suffrage League (WSL) be formed; the league's first annual meeting was held in the Town Hall Council Chambers on 28 July 1890. The chairperson, Alderman J.A. Clark, said that the women who opposed the suffrage had not known what it was like to fight the battle of life for themselves, while politicians were afraid that if women secured the vote they would also claim the right to stand for parliament. The *Boomerang* quoted him as asking, "What was there against women being eligible for election?" Mrs Edwards suggested that all women wanted was the vote, not to be parliamentarians.

Mrs Reading was elected president of the league, Mrs Keith secretary, and Mrs Clark and Mrs Brookes (her husband was a notable opponent of blackbirding in and out of parliament) vice-presidents. Committee members were May Jordan and Mesdames Cooper, Dyne, Chalk and Wells. Emma Miller's name is not mentioned at this stage.

The existence of the WSL prompted a supporter, the Hon. Richard Hyne to introduce a Suffrage Bill in the Legislative Assembly on 31 July 1890. He said he did so on the grounds of equality:
women had to pay taxes without representation and were subject to laws they had no voices in making. He cited the Factories and Shops Bill which vitally affected women workers, yet their opinions were not sought. He pointed out that the law recognised the ability of women to hold property, to conduct businesses, and to sue and be sued; all they needed to put them on an equal basis with men was the political franchise. Women could cast a vote in Wyoming, Washington territory, and Utah, and on the Isle of Man, and even locally in municipal elections, so why not in State elections?

In response, William Little said he thought the women of Queensland had all the privileges they were entitled to and that they would neglect their children if they attended political meetings. “It will be a cruel day when Queensland women get the vote”, he warned. William Perkins considered the whole matter a joke; housework and child care were quite enough to keep women occupied. Premier Boyd Dunlop Morehead claimed that the “fair sex” took very little interest in the subject and that it was better for women to keep out of politics as they had higher functions than politics to fulfil. “Hear! Hear!” echoed his followers. Other members showed their prejudices, saying women would become unsexed, and unfit for the duties of the home.

In August 1890 the first annual session of the ALF had decided that its parliamentary platform would include “Universal Adult Suffrage for all parliamentary and local elections”, but when attempts were made to develop suffrage branches and rally support the League was to be disappointed. Both the labour movement and the WCTU, the only women’s organisation at the time, stood aloof. By May 1891 most of the league’s active members had resigned.

Early in 1891 an effort was made to get the women’s unions in Queensland to take up the suffrage question, and Leontine Cooper wrote:

If women could once have it brought home to them that the question of the vote is an economic one; that their vote or no vote really means the price of their day’s work, and the condition under which it is done, they would take more lively interest in the matter than they do at present... Working women now take no interest in the matter of getting a vote, because they think their condition hopeless; they can...
not see the way to improvement. Teach them that the vote would render them able to have a say as to the value of their work, and as to the share of that value that is to come to them, the workers, and they would soon rouse themselves from their apathy. It is because women do not yet understand the meaning of woman's suffrage, and that they do not comprehend what good it can do them, that they are heedless and indifferent. The Trades' Union is a grand step taken toward the Suffrage. Let women meet together ... let them begin to discuss among themselves what they want to make their lives less hard and how to get it and they will soon see that they must have a vote if they ever want to rise out of the poor hard worked class they have been hitherto.  

The early 1890s was a busy time for radical women activists in other areas, engaged as they were in organising relief for the shearers' strike, forming their union and participating in the Royal Commission. As well there was growing unemployment. They were even busier salvaging their personal lives and possessions when in 1893 disaster struck — two major floods in Brisbane. The workers with homes in low-lying flood-prone areas, suffered most.

At the Seventh Intercolonial Trades Union Congress at Ballarat in 1891, discussion around the plank, "Extension of the franchise to all male adults by means of a provision for the registration of votes" ended in argument when an amendment was moved to omit the word "male" (and hence include women). The strongest supporters of the amendment were William Lane and William Spence. "There appeared to be a consensus of opinion in favour of the extension of the franchise to women, the great point of contention being as to whether it was opportune to agitate for the innovation until the principle of 'one man one vote' had been established, some of the speakers maintaining that the latter principle would be endangered by the adoption of the amendment."

The amendment was lost on the division thirty-seven votes to thirty-three. The original motion was not put and it was agreed that any further discussion on the political platform would be unwise. Delegates considered the matter was taking up too much of the time of Congress.

A later issue of the Worker carried two articles, both obviously written by William Lane — one on the one man-one vote issue and a Lucinda Sharpe article on "one woman-one vote." The former
article included a paragraph headed "Women should have justice too!":

One-man-one-vote has this weakness, this failing, that it does not include women. Not a single privilege can be advanced in support of the rights of men which does not apply with equal force with the rights of women. Our mothers, our wives, our sisters and our daughters are as essentially citizens of the State as any man of us. They must obey all laws, they suffer from unjust laws, they benefit by good laws, equally with the rest of us. We men deserve to have Justice denied to us if we deny Justice to our women.¹¹

But, he said, the Congress decision did not deny the rights of women:

It simply deals with one part of injustice, leaving another part of the same injustice to be dealt with in the future. And of this we may be sure and certain that the men of Queensland or of any other State, as a mass, will be far more inclined to secure for the womenfolk the same Justice which they have managed to secure for themselves than will any propertied section.¹²

In the second article, Lucinda, who was supposed to have read the proofs of the one-man-one-vote article, said that she had never been able to work out just why one woman shouldn’t have one vote as well as one man. Referring to the first article, she said:

Of course a very pretty allusion is made to the right of one-woman to the right of one-vote, for which I suppose a properly-minded woman should be properly grateful. Nevertheless it seems to me that we are left out in the cold and that one-man is nursing himself as usual over the fire and leaving one-woman, also as usual, to bring in the wood. It might not be very wise but it would be very much nicer if one-man put his arm round one-woman’s waist and said out straight they’d have one-vote together or not at all. Now, wouldn’t it? One-woman would do it if she was in one-man’s place, at least some one-woman would, but one-man always was a little bit inclined to use one-woman as a sort of convenience and leave her in the lurch at very slight provocation.¹³

Whatever the comments of the Worker, there was no denying that Labour men had not regarded women’s demand for a vote as of great importance in 1891. The Boomerang, now edited by Gresly Lukin, claimed: "Public opinion is not ripe for change . . . the advocates [of womanhood suffrage] must hasten slowly".¹⁴

It was to be many years before the Labour Party officially acknowledged the fact that the principle of the rights of man ap-
plied with "equal force to the rights of women", and its official platform adopted universal adult suffrage only in 1898.

The women of Wyoming (USA) were the first to gain the right to vote in 1869, but the first country to enfranchise women was New Zealand. This move, in 1893, brought hope and encouragement to women throughout the world. Suffrage societies had been organised in other Australian states in early 1893, but not in Queensland. Inspired by the New Zealand women's success fresh attempts were made to revive the campaign for the suffrage in Brisbane. The WCTU, frustrated by its lack of political power to influence the passage of legislation such as the Criminal Law Amendment Act\(^{15}\) and the Contagious Diseases Act (CD Act)\(^{16}\) in 1891 established a Suffrage Department. Its members at that early stage showed little interest, but in 1893, with the election of Mrs C. Trundle as the Suffrage Department's superintendent, a new surge of enthusiasm permeated the organisation. She became the provisional secretary of the committee formed in December 1893 with the aim of calling a public meeting to form a franchise association.

This committee was divided on the terms on which the vote should be granted — the existing plural vote or one woman-one vote — and the Worker exhorted its female readers:

Women of Queensland, ye who are working for the women's suffrage movement! Now that you are in sight of attainment of your desire, don't forget that Labour agitators have been for years fighting for adult suffrage, that is to say:

One man one vote

One woman one vote

Do not therefore damage a good cause by asking for a property vote over the heads of your poorer sisters.\(^{17}\)

and later "WANTED, one vote each, and one vote only, for every man and woman".\(^{18}\)

Held in the Protestant Hall on 28 February 1894, the first public meeting created much interest in the community, even earning four and a half broadsheet columns in the Telegraph. The article drew attention to the number of women wearing the white ribbon denoting their connection with the WCTU and allied groups.

The Hon. W. Taylor, MLC, occupied the chair, supported on the platform by Sir Charles Lilley, Lady Lilley, Alderman J. Clark,
Dr W. Little, Leontine Cooper, Emma Miller, Mrs C. Trundle, Mrs G. Harris and Mrs Moginie (a Quaker).

In opening the meeting Dr Taylor said it was a great and growing conviction in all British communities that it was only fair that women be given equal political rights with men.

Leontine Cooper then moved, "That this meeting of Brisbane citizens is of the opinion that the time has come when the electoral laws of the colony should be so altered as to extend to women the privilege of a political vote". She explained that the resolution had created much discussion on the provisional committee in adopting words that would not appear to be the formula of any political party. She said that they had no allegiance to any political party, for no party in Queensland had made woman suffrage a plank in its platform. In speaking to the resolution she raised feminist issues. She said that prior to the Married Women's Property Act of 1891, married women had no rights to their possessions and there were cases where men had taken everything, leaving women and children hungry. "Now", she added, "people were fond of saying women had so much influence that they did not need any political power". She gave examples disputing this claim. Four years earlier she said a petition for a woman warder to be appointed to attend women who had been arrested was well received in a deputation to Colonial Secretary H. Tozer but after reading their petition he had thrown it in the wastepaper basket.

She explained that women had also been ignored as citizens in recent legislation to form cooperative communities on the land. Women were not recognised as members of the group in relation to advanced loans, although they were equally important to the success of such communities.

Sir Charles Lilley, the key speaker, spoke to the resolution of Leontine Cooper. He explained that he was not in a new position as twenty-five years ago he had raised in the Legislative Assembly the issue of women's suffrage which he regarded as a "just and natural right which our women should possess". They should not have to prove their case, he said; rather the onus of proof against their bid should be on their opponents. He disputed that no political party had taken up the question and pointed to the policy of...
the Labour Party for one adult-one vote, which he supported "heart and soul".

He then set out to demonstrate the importance of the vote to the sweated working women and gave an example of women earning seven shillings and sixpence a week and playing a "blood sucking leech" five shillings a week rent. "What is left, ladies and gentlemen", he asked, "to find bread and meat and clothes, and all the necessaries of life for her and her children?" The Telegraph reported him as saying that

that was a state of things that interested woman most deeply and she should have the power to send to Parliament men who were not friends of the "sweaters" — men who had hearts in their bodies and heads on their shoulders and would bring this crime before the assembled representatives of England and would send it echoing through the world with the final words: "This shall no longer be" or that there should be an end to the system which made it possible. ¹⁰

He suggested that women had every possible interest in having the power to choose the men who could dispose of their liberty, their property and even their lives; they must also have through the vote, the power to mend matters not only for themselves, but to obtain for their husbands some amelioration of their lots, in fact justice for all.

Sarah Bailey of the Women's Union, and a commissioner at the 1891 Commission, moved an amendment (previously distributed to the audience) that the words "to extend to all women the right to one vote each and one vote only" be inserted after the word "altered". ²¹ Ruling the amendment out of order, Dr Taylor, in response to those who said the resolution ignored the sweated women workers, declared it referred to every adult woman whether she be a sweated girl or the woman who rode in a carriage.

Sir Charles Lilley advised the meeting not to press the amendment, but Emma Miller considered that it might be settled amicably by a show of hands on the question of one woman one vote. After the original motion was put and carried, with a large number abstaining, Mr W. Higgs called for a show of hands, as Emma had suggested, and "eight of ten" obliged. The "large and enthusiastic" meeting then dispersed.

In their editorials, both the Brisbane Courier and the Tele-

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graph complained that the attendance of an estimated four hundred was not large enough to represent all the adult females residing in the area (the Courier estimated their number at twenty thousand and the Telegraph at ten thousand). The Courier wrote: "We have already said that in our opinion women have a right to the franchise. Men certainly have no right to deny it to them. The question is do they want it? The franchise is not a worthless thing. It is not to be flung at people who do not ask for it because they do not desire it." The Telegraph expressed confidence that the suffrage would be won, but warned: "Its coming will not be hastened by unwise methods and it will be delayed by unwise advocacy".

To help settle divisions in the association and to clarify its objectives, a second meeting was called for 5 March 1894. An advertisement placed in the name of the provisional secretary, Mrs C. Trundle, said:

It is hoped there will be present all women who can possibly attend, both working women and those of leisure. It must on no account be representative of any class or party but voice only the political issues of sex.

In reporting the meeting the following day, the Telegraph drew attention to the fact that among the 180 people present there were 50 men, and headed its report: "Confusion and Disorder, Men requested to retire; One Woman One Vote Principle".

It drew attention to the fact that Alderman J.A. Clark and Mr Moginie sat next to Leontine Cooper to help her conduct the meeting which had promised to be a difficult one, as it was divided into two camps. After Mrs J. Clark moved that the organisation be named the Woman's Franchise Association of Queensland, Florence Collings moved, and Kate Macfie (Emma Miller's daughter) seconded, an amendment that "This association be called the Woman's Equal Franchise Association". This led to confusion, as reported in the Telegraph:

A Voice: May we know in plain words what the amendment means?
Chairwoman: The insertion of the word "equal".
Voices: What does "equal" mean? We want an explanation of "equal" and then we shall know how to vote.
Chairwoman: I think there is no sense in it.
Mrs Macfie: It means that everyone shall stand on an equal footing on
polling day; that there shall be no property votes.
Voice: I am really at a loss to know what it means.²⁶

When the amendment was put to the meeting, Alderman Clark had difficulty counting moving heads of chatting women and called upon them to keep steady. That the name of the organisation be the "Woman’s Equal Franchise Association" was carried by two votes — fifty-five to fifty-three.

The name disposed of, Mrs Preston moved that "the object of this Association is to obtain the franchise for women on the same conditions as those which apply to men". An amendment moved by Mrs Moginie with the aim of including all women — "working women and gentlewomen" — became the motion: "That the object of this Association shall be to secure to every adult woman the right of franchise".

Emma Miller, referred to in the Worker report as "a sturdy radical whose father took a prominent part in the Chartist movement of 1848",²⁷ moved an amendment calling for the object of the association to be to secure one woman-one vote. The Telegraph reported her as saying that:

they did not want the same women to have three or four votes (Applause). They knew the way men were now treated under the plural voting system and they did not want to have women so treated (Applause). She hoped society would endeavour to lift women out of the mire and to make every woman know that she was entitled only to one vote. Otherwise any man who had a block of land could divide it between his sisters and daughters and so get four or five votes additional (Applause). They did not ask for anything unfair. All women were equal; they wanted One Woman, One Vote and not three or four apiece for some women.²⁸

The new association was divided by the terms on which the vote should be granted. Should the women get the vote on the same terms as men — plural property votes for the wealthy with its unfair advantages as outlined by Mrs Miller — or universal suffrage of one adult-one vote?

In her contribution Leontine Cooper said a great number of members of the association were opposed to Mrs Miller’s amendment because it would retard alteration to the electoral laws if they asked for something they were not likely to get. She said that it appeared that some men were trying to gain their ends by cling-
ing to the petticoats of women, which was not a courageous thing to do. She drew dissent from the men in the audience when she stated that no body of men in Australia had ever endeavoured to bring about women's franchise. She went on to say (as reported in the Telegraph) that:

At a large meeting of Labour delegates held in Victoria some years ago Mr William Lane whom they all knew and respected made a motion in favour of the principle, but it was rejected by a large majority because members thought it would retard the chances of men getting one man one vote. The delegates said women could wait . . .

She gave another example of a conference in Sydney where few Labour men expressed a favourable attitude to the principle. She queried whether these cases showed "that men were anxious to do justice to women".

According to the Worker, Kate Macfie "elicited rapturous applause by her eloquent defence of the one-woman-one-vote principle". It reported her as saying that:

The men had not got one man one vote yet, but why should women think of what men had not got? If women wanted a thing, let them stand to their guns and fight for it till they got it. (Applause). Many poor women were slaving from morning till night trying to make ends meet, and while the electoral laws were constituted as they were at present, with the complicated procedure that had to be gone through in order to get a vote, a good many women situated would not be able to get a vote.

She caused an uproar when she said that these women were too poor to pay servants to mind their children while they voted, "not like some women who had nothing to do but wash themselves — (applause and dissent) — and dress themselves — (applause and renewed dissent) — and then take afternoon tea and talk scandal".

Mrs Briggs appealed to the "property vote women not to ask for more votes than their sisters who had no property" and stressed that women were willing to help men to obtain justice and agreed with Kate Macfie that it was not wrong to work for more than men had.

A suggestion from Leontine Cooper that all the men be asked to leave the hall was carried by fifty-two votes to forty-six. The Worker reported that after "the objectionable men had been got
rid of the property voters wished to take a vote again on the motions already carried"; thus the resolutions were allowed to stand and Emma Miller's one woman-one vote amendment was abandoned.

The following officers were elected: Mrs Donaldson president; Mesdames Cooper, Macfie and Moginie vice-presidents; and Mrs D.R. McConnel treasurer; included on the council were Mesdames Clark, Reading, Miller, Culpin, Swanwick, McConnel sen. and Fairman, and Miss Glassey. In its report of the meeting, the Worker pledged the support of the Australian Labour Federation to the movement, stating, "The bushmen of Queensland have an organisation which can and will distribute and collect petitions in all parts of the colony". The article continued: "There is no need for fear. There is every ground for hope. All that is necessary is that the whole souled, generous, justice-loving women who believe in One Woman One Vote shall be true to themselves...".

On 7 March a copy of Leontine Cooper's letter of resignation written to the WEFA appeared in both the Brisbane Courier and the Telegraph. In commenting on the letter the Courier referred to the WEFA as one of "Labour's auxiliary societies" and suggested that Queensland women would get the franchise all the sooner for holding aloof from class crusades.

A further clue to Mrs Cooper's position can be gained from a Dawn article (1891) in which she expressed dissatisfaction with the male union's refusal to accept female members. She considered it time workers regarded themselves as one class, independent of divisions of sex. Because of the male unions' attitude she distrusted the platform of the ALF for adult suffrage, considering it a sham. "Women as women", she wrote, "would be justified if they went for the property vote, if by so doing they could see the chance of winning the right of voting for a section of their sex".

Leontine Cooper's breakaway suffrage organisation, the Woman's Franchise League (WFL) was formed on 17 April 1894, its objects being "to secure Parliamentary franchise for women on the same conditions as it is or maybe granted to men". Its officers were Leontine Cooper president; Mesdames Shelton, Pope, Kingsbury and Swanwick vice-president, Mrs C.G. Preston secre-
tary, Mrs Butterly treasurer, and Mesdames Richardson, Alcutt, Sankey, Clough, Austin, Proctor, Bryce, Xenos, Yorston council members.

As President of the WFL, Leontine Cooper wrote to the local daily papers “to point out the respective position of the two Brisbane organisations for woman’s enfranchisement”:\(^{34}\) “The Labour party women have the best fight, for they have a strong organisation to back them up. We of the Woman’s Franchise League have nothing but our tongue, which all men know is but a feeble weapon.” She complained that Labour had never yet shown sympathy with women, but with the cry “Woman’s competition means lower wages” had kept women workers out of the unions and some trades and were indifferent to the fact that they thus thrust women “into the sweater’s den or a still lower hell”. She suggested that when woman had political power, “no matter on what basis or what terms, it will be seen that she will fight for the cause of her fellow-woman, irrespective of class or creed”. She expressed respect for the straightforwardness of Labour women at a previous WEFA meeting, saying it stood in “marked contrast to that of other members of the association”, a reference to the men who were now allowed to be members without the right to vote.\(^ {35}\)

This accusation of Labour Party links, Emma Miller, now president of the WEFA, denied in a letter to the Courier which was published with editorial comment.

Sir, — Kindly allow me a little space in reply to the letter of Mrs Cooper, appearing in your columns of to-day. I beg to state emphatically the Woman’s Equal Franchise Association is not allied to the Labour party or any other party. The powerful organisation which backs it up consists of the energies of the Democratic element of which it is chiefly composed. If there is any party in Queensland which will extend a helping hand to us to gain the franchise on the basis of one-woman-one-vote, we will, of course, accept their assistance with thanks. — I am, sir, &c,

EMMA MILLER, President Woman’s Equal Franchise Association. Brisbane, 30th April.

(If our correspondent means that the association is not formally allied to the Labour party, her statement will not be disputed. But in this matter it is just as well to deal with the real facts, not with formalities. And the capture of the association by the Labour party is beyond dis-
puke. It would be waste of breath on a platform or space in a newspaper to discuss the question of capture. At the same time we are sure the association will accept assistance to secure the franchise on the one-woman-one-vote from anybody. Similarly Labour orators have assured all sorts and conditions of men that Labour candidates for Parliament will be glad to get their votes. — Ed. Courier.)

Although Emma (and others) denied that WEFA had links with the Labour Party, it was indisputable that the struggle for women’s suffrage, one man-one vote and electoral reform were all closely linked in the one cause.

Although the WFL’s aims, in addition to forming branches and holding meetings, included gaining the assistance of the press, it was no more successful in this aim than was the WEFA; the conservative newspapers, after publishing the reports of the initial meetings, all but ignored the suffrage movement. The league led a deputation to Premier H.M. Nelson in October 1894 which, they told him, represented many classes of the community, as indicated by the names of those taking part: Lady O’Connell and Mesdames Edwards, Bancroft, Cooper, Trundle, Clark, McConnel, and Swanwick, and Misses Griffith and Young. They said the desire for the vote extended further throughout the community of women than had been expressed at the recent reading of the Powers bill in the House. Elizabeth Edwards said that the best housewives and homemakers were those “who realised they were citizenesses as well as mothers, wives and daughters”, and that it would be a simple matter to amend the present Elections Act to include women. Mrs Clark pointed out that Queensland women could already vote in municipal and divisional board matters and it was recognised that they exercised that franchise with “dignity and seemliness”.

Nelson replied, however, that he was against the movement altogether and believed that more ladies were against the franchise than were for it. He said he would have to be convinced that it was for their own good, and he advised the women not to dabble in politics because, from his experience, it was a “cruel game”. The influence of women would be good, but he doubted if politics would “be good for the ladies”.

“We do not want to get into the House”, said Elizabeth Edwards who back in 1887 had made the same statement when the
Suffrage League was first formed. "Never! Never!" echoed Mrs McConnel. Mrs Cooper told the Premier there was no doubt that he had great experience in saying "No" to deputations, but she looked forward to the time when he would be converted; he had advised them not to dabble in politics, but Matthew Arnold described politics as embracing literature, religion and morality; "if that was so then there was no doubt it was something for women to deal with".38 Premier Nelson ended the deputation by saying he would do nothing to oppose the franchise, nor would he do anything to forward it.

At an early meeting the WFL received a letter from the WEFA suggesting united action on the basis of seeking the franchise for every adult woman.

At a well-attended meeting of the WEFA on 21 April 1894, Emma Miller was elected president, Catherine Hughes (who had retired as secretary of the YWCA in 1888) secretary and Mrs Briggs vice-president; at a subsequent meeting Mrs Fairman was elected treasurer. She and Emma Miller were to hold their respective positions throughout the period of the suffrage campaign.

At this second meeting, members organised their first petition. Referring to the fact that the franchise had been granted to both white and Maori women in New Zealand and that they had exercised it wisely, the petition asked for a bill "granting to white women the franchise embodying the principle of one-adult-one-vote and one-vote-only".39 Opposition was expressed to the

Petition to Parliament.

Mrs. McFie read the following petition, which has been drawn up for presentation to Parliament:

"This petition humbly sheweth that we, the undersigned women of the colony of Queensland, are of opinion that the time has arrived when the trust of Parliamentary franchise can be safely and consistently extended to all white women who have been resident in the colony for a period of six months. 1. Your petitioners humbly submit that, as all women have to obey the laws, it is only just that they should have a voice in the selection of legislators who make the laws. 2. That the franchise has been granted to both white and Maori women in New Zealand, and that, so far as can be ascertained, they have exercised their right in the true interests of order and good government. 3. Assuming civilisation is to advance, its progress must be slow so long as one section of the community—a section equally as important as the other—is kept in political subjection. We therefore humbly submit that your Honourable House will be pleased to take into your serious consideration the advisability of introducing a bill granting to white women the franchise embodying the principle of one-adult-one-vote and one-only."

Mrs. McFie moved the adoption of the petition.

Mrs. Mooney spoke strongly against basing the petition on the one-woman-one-vote que-

WEFA petition, Brisbane Courier, 28 April 1894
wording “white women”, and Kate Macfie, who presented the petition, explained that the WEFA had used the word “white” because it was “very much against black labour”.

An amendment to the WEFA rules was agreed to the following month. It stated: “That the objects of this association shall be to secure to every woman the right to one vote and one vote only”. Members also agreed to having male members, without the right to vote, at general meetings. The membership had at this stage reached two hundred and fifty-six. Typical of arguments put during the women’s campaign were: “Women will be led by the claptrap of designing men”; “There will be disharmony in the home”; “Politics and parliament are only fit for men”; “If you take woman out of her place, things will get mixed up and be followed by horrible confusion”; “It will disrupt society, make woman unwomanly, turning them into loathsome self-assertive creatures with whom nobody could live”. Such insults incensed the women and made them more determined. Even people like Thomas Finney, who had had such a good attitude on the early closing issue, could not accept that women should have political rights; he feared they would ape men and take up their worst habits. Mr M. Duffy, MLA, opposed the franchise because “women of education and refinement may be unwilling to meet rowdy men at the polls” and the result would be that “the unintelligent vote would largely predominate”. And when a New Zealand woman won a municipal election in the Auckland borough of Parnell, the Brisbane Telegraph reported that she won 244 votes with a “poor man thing” far behind with 152 votes. When South Australian women won the right to vote in 1894, women and progressive men throughout the nation were exuberant. Not so the National Defence League. It considered the suffrage fad a great folly, saying “To have fifty or sixty legislators deliberately admitting that men are not able to govern the colony without the assistance of a lot of FUSSY, SNUFFY, GOSSIPING OLD WOMEN is very funny”. To consider women equal to men its members saw as absurd and they considered proof of women’s inferiority was their villainy as instanced by the French revolution. “Yet this sex is to govern us and not the best of the sex, but the worst. The best of the sex will be
MR POWERS: "The hon. member has never been able to effect anything good in this House, and he has now defamed and abused women. . . . I do not believe there is a man in this House who has not had a good mother, and has not the hon. member defamed our mothers, our sisters, and our wives?"
— Vide Hansard

Worker, 17 November 1894

engaged in nursing babies and other suitable and natural avocations." 44

A bill presented in Parliament by Thomas Glassey in August that year sought the vote for all natural-born or naturalised British subjects over the age of twenty-one, but expressly stated that "no Aboriginal natives of Australia, or those from Japan, China, India or other parts of Asia, Africa, South Seas or Oceania [would] be eligible". 45 Another bill was presented at the same time by Charles Powers, but while Glassey's bill also dealt with the property vote and electoral reform, it dealt simply with the property vote and electoral reform, it dealt simply with the question of granting
women the franchise. Both bills were backed by the WEFA's petition. (The petition was also included as a one-woman-one-vote coupon in the *Worker* — one for men to sign and the other for women. In all, 7781 women's signatures were collected and 3575 men's.)

The WEFA and WCTU followed with eager interest the debate on the bills. Like most moves to alter established law, the bills met with opposition. Attorney-General (later Premier) Byrnes stated that it was against the wish of women at this time to have the vote thrust upon them, and Colonial Secretary Tozer (who had advocated shooting down the striking shearers) told his supporters that they would be outvoted if the bill were passed; he referred to the inaugural meeting of WEFA, saying it had been "taken possession of by those who wanted to use the ladies to increase representation".46

After the defeat of the two bills the women returned to the drawing board: more petitions, more meetings, more leaflets. Suffrage groups mushroomed throughout the State — in Townsville, Maryborough, Gympie, Bundaberg, Winton and Charters Towers, and in Brisbane suburbs.

In spite of early differences the various suffrage groups apparently worked together setting up new branches. The *Worker* in 1895 reported that one hundred men and women had gathered to help form a WEFA branch at Sherwood. Speakers included Leontine Cooper (WFL), Emma Miller (WEFA) and Mrs Trundle (WCTU).

Meetings did not always run smoothly. Florence Collings wrote to the *Worker* in defence of her contribution to a lecture given by Mrs Foot, whose praise of charity groups for their work for the poor she opposed. Collings had attacked these groups, claiming they were subsidised by the sweaters who gained their wealth by exploitation. She was also critical of the Salvation Army and was upset that Emma Miller, as president, had ruled her out of order. The following edition of the *Worker* carried a letter in reply, signed by Emma Miller and Catherine Hughes.

The Council of the Woman's Equal Franchise Association desires to state in reference to a letter signed "Florence Collings" which appeared in last week's issue, that Rule 11, standing orders, reads: "It shall be incumbent upon every member when about to speak, to rise
ONE WOMAN ONE VOTE COUPON.

Men and Women of Queensland, you are hereby invited by the members of the Women's Equal Franchise Association to each sign one of the petitions heretofore printed, with a view to assist in a most important political reform. Cut out the coupon, write in your name and address, and forward to Miss Husseys, Secretary Women's Equal Franchise Association, care of Worke Office, Brisbane. The W.E.A. specially invite the boatmen to lend their assistance. Hon. delegates and other officers of the A.W.U. will therefore be kind enough to collect the coupon, enclose them in an envelope, and forward to above address.

WOMEN'S PETITION COUPON.

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland in Parliament assembled.
The Humble Petition of the undersigned women resident in Brisbane and other parts of the Colony of Queensland.

Showeth:
1. That your Petitioners are of opinion that the time has arrived when the trust of Parliamentary Franchise can be safely and consistently extended to all white women who have been residents in the colony for a period of six months.
2. That your Petitioners humbly submit that as all women have to obey the laws it is only just that they should have a voice in the selection of the legislators who make the laws.
3. That the Franchise has been granted to both White and Maori women in New Zealand, and that as far as can be ascertained they have exercised their rights in the true interests of order and good government.
4. That, assuming civilisation is to advance, its progress must be slow as one section of the community—a section equally as important as the other—is kept in political subjection.

Your Petitioners therefore humbly pray that your Honourable House will be pleased to take into your serious consideration the advisability of introducing a bill granting to white women the franchise embodying the principle of one adult one vote and one only.

And your Petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray, &c.

NAME.                        ADDRESS.

MEN'S PETITION COUPON.

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland in Parliament assembled.
The Humble Petition of the undersigned men resident in the Colony of Queensland.

Showeth
That your Petitioners desire to bring before your Honourable House their knowledge that their sisters the women resident in the Colony of Queensland are humbly petitioning your Honourable House that in your wisdom your Honourable House will be pleased to grant them the subject matter of the prayer of their petition—the Elective Franchise.

Your Petitioners therefore humbly pray that your Honourable House will be pleased to have introduced a bill granting the Elective Franchise to the women of the Colony of Queensland on the basis of one woman one vote.

And your Petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray, &c.

NAME.                        ADDRESS.

WEFA coupon, Worker 7 June 1894

and address the chair, and conduct herself in a respectful manner towards the meeting". It was under the power contained in that standing order that Miss Collings was called to order. She could have been called to order under Rule 13 of standing orders
which reads: "No religious discussion will be allowed at any meeting".

(Signed) (Mrs) Emma Miller, President
(Miss) Catherine Hughes, Hon. Secretary.  

At the time of the 1896 election WEFA sent circulars to all candidates asking, "Are you in favour of extending the franchise to women on the single vote basis?" and if they would support a Bill to that effect. Their replies were published in the Worker. All Labour candidates supported extension of the franchise, but conservative member William Joseph Castling (Townsville) claimed that the vote for married women, like having husbands and wives of opposite religions, would bring an "element of strife and discord". Mr S. Grimes (Oxley) preferred to "answer all political inquiries from the platform". Colonial Secretary Tozer's full reply was published:

Colonial Secretary's Office, Brisbane, March 1, 1896.
Miss Hughes. — I do not comprehend the question you have asked me, and a feeling of courtesy to your sex compels me to send you some reply. What do you mean by the words "on the single vote basis"? If you mean that a single girl is to have a vote, and that when she marries and thereby becomes one with her husband, they two are only to have one vote, I should reply, "certainly not!" If again, you mean that a single woman is alone to have the franchise, then as in my opinion married women are much more valuable members of the community, I should again say, certainly not, but if you mean that in addition to seeking the franchise for your sex that you assume they have already obtained it and wish to ascertain from me whether I am in favour of an absolutely indiscriminate suffrage to all women, I say again, certainly not.

To Mr Tozer the WEFA replied:
Hon. Horace Tozer. Sir. — My council have read your letter of 1st inst., and in reply I am to write you, that they regret that in your attempt to be courteous you lost your self-control, and made two distinct mis-statements of fact, for the amount of brain power expended in penning your reply, proves you fully comprehend the questions you were asked, and nothing but a strong desire to convey an insult under cover of an appearance of pedantic and courtly courtesy to their sex led you to send that travesty of a reply. — Yours &c., Catherine Hughes, Hon. Secretary.

Emma Miller and WEFA members threw their energies into
campaigning for acceptable candidates, and spent tiring hours at the polling booths.

The WCTU’s Suffrage Department was meanwhile raising other matters in its bid for the vote. The WCTU’s 1897 annual report, in referring to the Married Women’s Property Act which had been passed that session, stated that although it might be beneficial to women “the fact remains that we are helpless without a vote in what actually is our business”.

The Married Women’s Property Act 1890-97 gave women the right to inherit, acquire, hold or dispose of their own property. In 1898 the presidential report raised the question of other injustices women laboured under, instancing the father’s right to power over the children, the unequal rate of wages in the Education Department, and the iniquitous Contagious Diseases (CD) Acts.

In 1897, the Worker regularly publicised the platform of the Queensland Parliamentary Labour Party under the heading “Socialism in Our Time”. “What objection can there be to ONE-WOMAN-ONE-VOTE?” it asked. “A full and complete franchise would render the Legislation truly representative of the whole community.” There followed a testimony from the Legislature of Wyoming pointing out that the suffrage there had done great good and wrought no harm; in fact, it had largely aided in “banishing crime, pauperism and vice; secured peaceful and orderly elections, good government and a remarkable degree of civilisation and order”. It said, “Not one county in Wyoming was a poorhouse, . . . our gaols are almost empty, and crime (except that committed by strangers in the State) [is] almost unknown; and as the result of experience we urge every civilised community on earth to enfranchise its women without delay”.

The Courier complained that women weren’t interested in politics, as indicated by the few to be found in the Public Gallery. But some years later, the women’s column, “In a Woman’s Mind”, in the Worker explained what happened to a woman visiting parliament. First she was confronted at the entrance by a policeman who, with an “offensive moral thumb” directed her upstairs to a side gallery. “The atmosphere aloft is hushed and mock heroic, and by standing and leaning over the rail, she can see all the consolidated wisdom of the State . . . cards requesting ladies to keep
their seats plaster the gallery, and another policeman is at hand to suppress her if she reads aloud or takes off her boots.  

In 1898 the newly elected premier, Thomas Joseph Byrne, promised there would be a referendum on universal suffrage at the next election, provided parliament agreed. In response to this promise he received a deputation from the WEFA, which included Emma Miller, Catherine Hughes and Mrs Cross and two members of the Legislative Assembly, introduced by Thomas Glassey. Emma spoke of the widespread support they had found which, she said, was a reflection of the growing interest in the issue. Mrs Cross pointed out that those candidates who had expressed support for the suffrage had been elected. Catherine Hughes denied that most women did not want the franchise and stated that politicians might as well say that most men didn’t want it because many of them might not vote when full adult suffrage was law. They presented to Premier Byrne a petition of about 10,000 signatures, and expressed exasperation at the idea of his proposed referendum. What sort of democracy was that? They asked. Half the population would be denied the right to vote on an issue that vitally concerned them.

When Premier Byrne met an untimely death in 1898, nothing further had been done about women’s suffrage. His statue was later erected in Centenary Park, but the suffragists suggested that the best memorial would have been the long-awaited franchise.

Another milestone was reached in 1899 when Western Australian women won their battle for the franchise. This gain again boosted the morale and increased the determination of suffragists in other states. Nevertheless, Queensland’s conservatives continued to treat the issue with derision. During the 1899 election campaign, Premier J.R. Dickson suggested that if women had the vote “they would treat it as a plaything and reject it after using it once or twice”. Angered by this and the chauvinistic attitudes of other candidates, women wrote to the newspapers arguing their case. Support for the premier came from women with such nom de plumes as “A Woman at Home” and “Womanly Woman”. Referring to the suffragists as the “discontented ones”, one woman claimed that they didn’t represent all Queensland women, most of whom, according to her, didn’t want the vote; she believed
Letter from Catherine Hughes to Premier Dickson, 22 May 1899 (Queensland State Archives)
that "womanly intelligence" could not be better directed, even from a political standpoint, "than by training our sons to be the future able legislators of our country, and our daughters to be the glory of the home".57 Others opposed the premier, saying his statement was unwise and alienated him from the women whom he had put on such a low plane. One woman wrote that his unwise utterance was more "suggestive of Rip Van Winkle than of an enlightened and responsible statesman living at the close of the nineteenth century" — well-authenticated and authoritative reports from places where women had the vote showed that women continued to vote and his claim was based on "his own imagination not facts".58

In that year, on 1 December, the conservatives were elected with a small majority, but a combination of factors led to the forming of a government by Anderson (Andrew) Dawson, this was the first labour government in the world. On being refused an adjournment to prepare its program, this government resigned on 5 December and was replaced by the conservative Philp ministry on 7 December, but Labour now held an important position in the Lower House.59 To appease Labour, Home Secretary Foxton introduced a bill which included one adult — one vote. He told the House, "I little thought it would fall to my lot to introduce a Bill of this sort into the Assembly".60 The bill didn't pass the second reading, but during campaigning for the referendum on federation Premier Dickson promised to introduce one adult-one vote in return for a "Yes" vote. This referendum caused the women further consternation: "Why should only the masculine half of the people decide on such an important question as the Australian nation and people?" the WCTU asked.61

(If evidence that Emma had brought the vision of the Chartists to her family and friends is needed, a letter to the Worker supporting the suffrage campaign will suffice. In it, her son George Calderwood urged the workers of Queensland to "rise in a body and demand government of the people and for the people. Show that you are as courageous as the old Chartists.")62

In 1900 the Governor foreshadowed in his opening speech, the introduction of Premier Dickson’s promised legislation, but once again hopes were dashed when the Dickson ministry fell and Robert
Why Should Women Have the Franchise?

BY AUNT MARTHA.

1. Because there are no good and sufficient reasons why she should not.

2. It is infra. dig. for men's mothers, sisters and sweethearts to be classed with lunatics and criminals.

3. It is the greatest anomaly of the day for the British Constitution to allow a woman to be Supreme Ruler, to give her the legal right of life and death and then deny other members of her sex the right of representation.

4. Women's interests are identical with men's.

5. "They two are one," then why bestow the vote on only one half.

6. So far representation of one half the human family in Queensland has not been so startling a success as to persist in the continuance.

7. "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world"—then give that wonderful ruler a vote.

Why should women have the franchise? Worker, 14 July 1900

Philp became premier. Showing insensitivity, the Philp Government presented an Adult Suffrage Bill that included a "family vote", giving the right to "every male elector who has been the father of two children born in wedlock in the State of Queensland to have two votes". This was merely the plural vote in another form. It not only discriminated against women, it also discriminated against many males, including the itinerant workers, most of whom were estimated to be single. Derisively dubbed the "baby vote" or the "tandem vote", it drew the comment from the Worker: "We asked for a vote and they demanded a baby". (This bill was based on Belgian legislation, which did not, however, specify the required number of children.) Home Secretary Foxton said the judgment of a married man with two children...
could be trusted to give an intelligent vote, because as the breadwinner he came most in contact with both men and women. Did that mean that childless married couples or those with only one child lacked intelligence and experience and did it imply that women were too inferior and inexperienced to cast a vote, asked Labour parliamentarians.

The Telegraph considered it was a stupid provision, inserted to bring low pantomime to the Assembly: "Whilst the extra vote is given to worthless men if father of two born in wedlock in Queensland, it will not be given to the most deserving of women who may have a normal family of ten... We commend this Bill to be publicly burned by a common hangman." Other newspapers also condemned the proposed legislation, including the London Daily Mail. It suggested that the bill was being introduced "in consequence of the steady fall in the birth rate in Queensland". The Hon. Charles Jenkinson, MLA, said a woman who had given birth to two children and had to pass through the "valley of death" was more entitled to an extra vote; and the Hon. H. Turley, MLA, stated that the impression of people outside Parliament could be summed up in the reaction of Emma Miller, president of the WEFA, who, when he asked her for her thoughts on the bill, had replied, "You cannot go and listen to a fool thing like that; there is no business meant in it." After much discussion in which examples of the absurdity of the legislation were given — what would happen, someone asked, if the children were born outside Queensland or if one was born in New South Wales and the other in Queensland — the bill was finally rejected.

The acceptance of the 1899 referendum meant the federation of the separate colonies into the Commonwealth of Australia. The national election for the first Commonwealth Parliament was held in March 1901. As the women of South Australia and Western Australia were the only ones eligible to vote in this election, petitions were now directed to the newly elected Parliament asking for the suffrage for all Australian women. On 9 April 1902 the Federal Electoral Act enfranchised women for Federal elections and made them eligible for election to Parliament. Australian women thus became the first in the world with this right. (Aborigines — men and women — did not receive voting rights until 1967).
The *Worker* was the only newspaper in Brisbane to congratulate the women on achieving the federal vote. It pointed out that women readers of the local dailies were not aware that they were no longer "political lunatics or lower animals". It said that the *Courier* and the *Telegraph* had been pleased to accept the paid advertisements of the suffrage organisations, but had refused to publish reports of WEFA meetings. The *Worker* published a letter headed "Political Housewives", from N. Quad:

The passage of the female suffrage clauses of the Franchise Bill through the Senate practically assures the vote to the women of the Commonwealth at the next Federal elections, and the undersigned,
with what sense of sex justice a mere man may possess, rejoices in the fact. On the low ground of expediency alone, putting aside more exalted titles, it is good that woman is coming into politics — if only to wash up! We men have "batched" politically for a long time now, and a nice mess we’ve made of things! The sooner the women get to work to clean up the "House" after us the better for us all. 67

At the same time a Brisbane journalist wrote in the Courier that she had seen in Sydney a fashionable handsome woman who, she suggested, was what was needed in Queensland as president of the WEFA. The suffragists responded to this insult to Emma by re-electing her president at their 1902 annual meeting. Commented the Worker’s womens page: "The conservatives are worried that our president is an aggressive Democrat, always ready to break a lance for Labour". 68 Actually Emma was admired by her friends for her dress sense, and her "natty up-to-date appearance". 69 She was also respected for her belief that where conscience was satisfied, unpopularity should not matter: respectability meant acting in humanity’s interest.

Conservatives would not have approved of Emma’s indignant reaction when Edward VII proclaimed her birthday, on 26 June 1902, as Coronation Day. "Being a sterling Democrat, Mrs Miller objects to the coincidence, and not to be outdone, will jump a year, so all congratulations and gifts must be postponed for twelve months", commented the Worker’s womens page. 70

Australian women’s win had an international impact, with other countries seeking information on how the vote was achieved. Vida Goldstein of Victoria was the Australian delegate to an international women’s conference in Washington and was elected to the International Women’s Suffrage Committee that grew out of the conference. She was also on the committee of three formed to exchange information between suffrage groups.

The suffrage campaign had for the first time given women an opportunity to try themselves out as speakers, to marshal their ideas and arguments, and to gain confidence. It also led in 1894 to the publication of the Brisbane Courier’s first column for women. The Worker followed in 1896 with its column, "Chiefly Concerning Women"; its writer was identified simply by the byline, "By a Woman", but Catherine Hughes, WEFA secretary,
was once a guest columnist. Dot Dashaway, Aunt Martha and Comrades Mary and Olive also edited the column at different stages. Comrade Mary (Lloyd) wrote the most interesting columns, giving an insight into current attitudes and activities. Aunt Martha later became “Vesta” on the Brisbane Courier, presenting a different ideological approach to working-class events. Dot Dashaway wrote only a few columns, and was sometimes critical of the WEFA. She thought, for example, that electing three vice-presidents of the organisation in 1899 was unnecessary as their president, Emma Miller, never missed a meeting and was always punctual.
Seven

Are you on the roll?

Shall they call to stonyhearts and dullard brains
on Polling Day?
When the twain in conflict grapple — Right and Wrong
in battle smoke
Labour’s flag shall sweep to victory in the hands of
Womenfolk.

Johnn Smith, 1903

Queensland suffragists, as before Federation, continued the
campaign for the right to vote in state elections. In the meantime
a federal election was announced for 16 December 1903. With
women able to exercise their electoral right for the first time, the
political parties realised they would have to woo the women’s
vote.

Writing in the Brisbane Courier in March 1903 in reply to two
women correspondents who had opposed federal legislation
abolishing the “kanaka traffic,” Leontine Cooper said that
women were “as sharply divided in political opinions as men”.
But she believed Labour women were better educated on political
matters that concerned them than society women who had not
thought it “womanly” or “nice” to be interested in such matters.¹
Conservative member Frank Digby Denham was reported in the
Brisbane Courier on 3 July that year as saying that it “no longer
[mattered] whether you were for or against the women having the
vote”; the fact was that they had it and “should be shown how to
use it intelligently”.² The following week the conservatives acted
to form a separate women’s group with the aim of capturing the
women’s vote by sending out the following circular.

Brisbane,
July 8th 1903

Madam,

As the Federal franchise has been granted to women, and the Fed­
eral Elections for Senators and Representatives will take place at the
end of this year, it is desirable that Queensland women should, with a
'Politics for Women', Woman Today, April 1937. (Reprinted from Barrier Truth, 6 March 1903, when Bob Ross was editor)

view of making their vote a substantial factor towards wise and just Federal legislation, form themselves into an organization.

A meeting for the purpose of adopting Rules, Name, etc., will be held on Tuesday, July 14th, at 8 p.m., in the School of Arts, Ann Street, and the favour of your presence and sympathy is requested.

Yours truly
CHRISTINA CORRIE

As 14 July was very wet, only fifty women attended and the meeting was adjourned until the following week. That night, the hall was packed to overflowing and 260 women enrolled. The main speakers were Leslie Corrie, Mayor of Brisbane, and Andrew Joseph Thynne, MLA, who trusted that women who had had the responsibility of the franchise “thrust upon them” would go to the ballot and record their votes. He reminded those present that he had been instrumental in introducing the married women's property legislation.

The newly formed organisation was originally named the Queensland Women’s Electoral Union, but later changed its name to the Queensland Women’s Electoral League (QWEL) “as many people disliked the word ‘union’”, but also to avoid confusion with the National Liberal Union (NLU). (A women's branch of the
NLU had been formed in Brisbane in 1901, but its lack of political independence lessened its value and power. Among those attracted to QWEL were professional women such as Dr Lilian Cooper, her friend Josephine Bedford, and Elizabeth Fewings headmistress of the Girls’ Grammar School. Margaret Ogg, who had been active in the WCTU, became secretary; Christina Corrie president; Mesdames Lilley, Harris and Fox vice-presidents; and Mrs N. Dods treasurer. Branches were soon formed in Brisbane suburbs and in country towns. Dr Eveleen Ashworth, in her history of QWEL, comments that though in the beginning “it received the support and encouragement of many public men, it is evident that the men at that time did not regard the women’s vote as an active political force, but merely as a reinforcement of the male vote”. The wording of QWEL’s manifesto did not reflect feminist issues, but was based on the platform of the NLU. John Cameron, MLA, who seemed to wield a great deal of influence in the wording, stated that the anti-socialist clause was the strongest one in the platform. Although QWEL at first claimed to be non-party and open to all, it later admitted to an anti-socialist bias, its aim being to capture the women’s vote for conservative candidates and educate women in the use of the franchise. Its platform did not include the franchise for women in Queensland state elections, but in October 1903 QWEL joined members of the NLU women’s branch in a deputation to the premier on the issue, and individual members of the group, such as Margaret Ogg, campaigned extensively for the vote throughout Queensland. At first QWEL allowed men to become members and its first council consisted of nine women and nine men, though all of its officials were women. Its leaflets and early policies continued not to reflect women’s issues, but this policy changed in 1906, and QWEL became a women’s political movement with no male members.

QWEL opposed the federal divorce law of 1903, fearing it would bring the standards of states with stricter divorce laws down to the level of those of Victoria and New South Wales, considered by QWEL to have lax laws. They gave figures to prove that Queensland’s laws led to only one divorce in 435 marriages while those of New South Wales led to one divorce in 36 marriages.

Remembering the dependent role of the women’s branch of
NLU, QWEL resisted all offers of affiliation with conservative political parties but did send delegates to the NLU conferences. Finding that the "rigorous discipline of the Labour Party tended to force together those group with anti-socialist inclinations," QWEL repeatedly became loosely associated with conservative political parties. It helped these parties with their election campaigns, and even had representation on selection committees. QWEL was not concerned about the plural vote, but protested against compulsory arbitration and nationalisation. It advocated "Australia for Australians but no restriction on European immigration" and stricter marriage laws.

Rigid class structures of the time prevented women from identifying with one another across class lines. Emma Miller, with her background of Victorian English divisions of "ladies" and "women", saw QWEL members as the opposition. To her, they belonged to a class that flaunted its wealth and position; they were the wives of employers who exploited factory girls, shop assistants and outworkers; they were employers themselves, of the "slaveys". They represented all that Labour women were fighting against; they were a visible opponent. Women had formed themselves into two opposing groups — capital and labour. Women of the WEFA were incensed that after they had campaigned ceaselessly since 1894 with the suffrage leagues and the WCTU, the tory women, most of whom had stood aloof, had now come into the campaign when it was nearly won.

In the same year, 1903, the Women Worker's Political Organisation (WWPO) was formed, with Emma Miller as president. The bulk of its membership came from the WEFA; in fact it is said that the whole WEFA membership moved into the WWPO. This is believable, as WEFA went into recess for three months so that WWPO could concentrate on the federal election.

The 1903 Australian election was the first time the women of any country had been able to vote in a national election (New Zealand didn't become a self-governing dominion until 1907). With its headquarters at the Trades Hall and its platform including the maintenance of White Australia, compulsory arbitration, and nationalisation of monopolies (including the drink trade), WWPO's Labour bias was obvious and freely admitted. The plat-
Women Workers' Political Organisation.

HEADQUARTERS:
Trades Hall, Brisbane.

OBJECTS:
To secure the just political representation of women in the
Australian Federal and State Parliaments.
To promote and safeguard the interests of women in the
body politic.
To advance the political representation of women by meetings,
lectures, visitations, the distribution of literature, and
all other available legitimate means.

PLATFORM:
1. Maintenance of a White Australia.
2. Compulsory Arbitration.
3. Old Age Pensions.
4. Nationalisation of Monopolies, including the drink
traffic.
5. Equal Marriage and Divorce Laws.
9. Restriction of Public Borrowing.
10. International Arbitration.

Terms of Membership, One Shilling a Year.

Women in sympathy with the above Organisation are
invited to communicate with the Hon. Secretary, c/o Trades
Hall, Brisbane.

Women Workers' Political Organisation
leaflet, 1903 (National Library)

form also included equal marriage and divorce laws, equal
pay for equal work, and equal parental rights
over children. The WWPO
aimed to secure just political
representation in state
and federal parliaments, to
promote and safeguard the
interests of women in the
body politic, and to
advance the political represen-
tation of women by
meetings and other means.

In March 1903, the Lab-
our leader in the Federal
Parliament, John Watson,
visited Brisbane. This was
the first visit of a Labour
member of the Federal Par-
liament that gave
Australian women the vote and his visit
"brought many thoughtful
women together". Between
speeches Emma Miller, as
president of the WEFA,
moved a resolution:

On behalf of the women present at this meeting, and for
our sisters throughout Queensland we desire to express
our heartfelt appreciation of the work of the first Parliament of
the Commonwealth of Australia. More especially are we grateful for
the granting of the political franchise to our sex, and we beg now to
move that the best thanks of this meeting to to Mr Watson and his colle-
agues for the whole-hearted support they have given to the adult suff-
frage movement.\(^{10}\)

But the Worker womens page criticised the inequality shown
them at the meeting: through "mistaken kindness" women were
invited to sit together in certain seats reserved for them but "some bold feminine spirits laid themselves all over the Hall". It suggested that Labour committees might note that with "equality at the ballot box it is foolish to make the sexes look afraid of each other at public meetings".\footnote{11}

On 12 March 1903, the suffragists mourned the loss of their ablest writer, Leontine Cooper. She had died suddenly of bronchial pneumonia at the age of sixty-six. Like Emma Miller, she was a frail-looking woman. She was on the committee of the School of Arts and it was her vote that had decided that the \textit{Woman} should be placed in its reading room. She was devoted to the cause of women, and her last letter had appeared in the \textit{Brisbane Courier} on 4 March 1903.

While the WWPO raised feminist issues, QWEL’s electoral handouts did not relate to their particular concerns of women. Other than an attempt to run the Women’s Electoral League in Townsville on non-party lines, there is no evidence of any push to form a non-party women’s political group, as in other states. The \textit{Worker} later claimed that though the Townsville League had been planned to educate and "elevate women to a conception of the full power and majesty of the franchise without leading her into the snares of party controversy", the inevitable had happened, and instead of this "idyllic dream" the league was "split into two fierce-eyed camps, ready to fly at each other’s throats, and tear out handful’s of each other’s hair". It said that it would not take long for women of progressive instincts to find they had little in common with the silvertails who dominated the women’s leagues, who were "‘ladies’ in all the prejudices and narrowness of class and ‘women’ for the time being only".\footnote{12}

Emma Miller continued to be the driving force in WWPO and her personality and keen intellect were a continual source of inspiration to those who worked with her.\footnote{13} Under her leadership, the WWPO undertook an energetic election campaign. The members felt the responsibility of being the first women in the world to vote for a national parliament and threw themselves into the campaign with enthusiasm. WWPO held three mock elections, with emphasis on avoiding informal voting; organised ten public meetings; and printed four leaflets and distributed them during
Are you on the roll?

door-to-door canvassing and visits to working women at their factories and workshops.

Emma referred to QWEL women as “strawberry and cream ladies”, adding, “We can’t offer women strawberries and cream, but we can offer them fair conditions and a bright future”.

Concerned that the Valley WWPO’s two voluntary canvassers, Emma Miller and Mrs Forster, were approaching women working in shops and factories, QWEL sought suggestions on how it could reach women workers. It was decided to ask QWEL branches to consider employing paid organisers in their areas. QWEL branches held regular meetings and lectures to educate women in the use of the franchise in conservative interests. Unlike the WWPO, which was unable to get press publicity, or government support, QWEL was approached by the local press for reports and later received financial assistance from the Government.

The WCTU named 1903 Franchise Year and organised its own activities to educate women on how to estimate the worth of political promises; to register a vote; and to interpret laws that would affect them. These activities included distributing leaflets on the Federal Franchise and Electoral Act, and the divorce law. The WCTU also wrote to the Methodist Conference in Brisbane to remind members of a circular issued by the Townsville Council of Churches. This circular had strongly urged ministers to use their best endeavours to induce women to enrol, and to bring before them the issues of the day, reminding them of their duty as Christian citizens to express their views in a practical manner by registering a vote. The Methodist Conference in reply declared itself in sympathy with the suggestions raised in the letter and said it would urge women to enrol and use the franchise.

The favourite greeting of the time was, “Are you on the roll?” On approaching women to enrol for the first time, WWPO members found that many refused, repeating the platitudes that had been instilled in them from birth, “A woman’s place is in the home”, or “A woman’s place is in the back”. Concerned, the Worker’s women’s page commented that “the blight of the kitchen speaks in such women. When a woman feels good company for the cockroaches in the kitchen and the fowls in the yard, the blight has done its full work.” The writer suggested that the
victims wanted a good dose of Charlotte Stetson, who wrote, “Only as we live, think, feel, and work outside the home do we become humanly developed, civilised, socialised. Science, art, government, education, industry — the home is the cradle of
The women of the N.L.U. have been advised to make themselves agreeable to the wives and daughters of the working man in order to win their vote. Set aside all feelings of class and caste," said their adviser, *For the time at least.*" *Worker*, 11 July 1903

They were angered when they discovered that a policeman checking the electoral rolls was putting every woman's occupation down as "domestic duties". Exasperated, they supposed "he thought he was doing his duty to his country".  

Emma travelled to country areas to form branches of the WWPO. She addressed large gatherings of women and reported...
meeting great kindness from Labourites everywhere. Good reports of her speeches were given, even in opposition papers. WWPO's were formed in Gympie and Maryborough, and the recently formed Democratic League of Women at Bundaberg proposed to adopt the new name, WWPO. Emma discovered a "much better Labour spirit prevailing among working women outside Brisbane". When Labour MLA Peter Airey told the Bun-
daberg meeting that since women had been granted the vote in New Zealand, marriages had increased by fifteen per cent, Emma commented, "Once people said the vote would make husbands and wives murder each other — now it is a matrimonial qualification".

Mrs J.S. Collings Snr and Mrs L. Adler accompanied Emma, now aged 65, to Ipswich and Toowoomba where "the veteran Mrs Miller made the longest speech of her life, and was so rejuvenated by the applause she gained that she announced, 'I am only beginning to live'".

At the same time Frank Digby Denham was telling the women of the opposition NLU, "Every vote is needed. Make yourselves agreeable to the wives and daughters of the working man. Get alongside them in the train, bus and tram. Shake hands with them. Engage them in conversation. We want their votes. Set aside all feelings of caste and class — for the time being at least." This statement was greeted with derision, earning a cartoon in the Worker and the advice to a working women's meeting from Labour leader Browne, "When a NLU lady starts shaking hands with you in the tram, for your votes sake, just say to the conductor, 'Has this lady paid her fare?'"

WWPO women, with equal pay high on the agenda, made use in their election propaganda of NLU's advertisement for a male canvasser at three pound a week and QWEL's for a female canvasser at the lesser rate of two pounds.

QWEL and WWPO women worked hard and long at the booths on election day. Several years later Mrs Finney of the WWPO told of her program: "I was up before sunrise and my husband and children didn't see me all day. I was the first woman to record a vote in Brisbane North. Then I was busy bringing women to vote all day."

A letter in the Worker, signed "Qui Vive", paid tribute to Labour's women:

Three cheers for the Labour women! It was splendid to see them on election day, standing in the broiling sun outside the polling booths, barracking for Labour's candidates — beating the men at their own game! Their enthusiasm was inspiring, but it wasn't all bubble and fiz — they did the work: they grafted in a way that put the most experienced campaigners on their mettle... Then the women who took
the platform and stump! — gallant little Mrs Miller, instinct with a natural eloquence springing straight from a heart that has never lost the fervidness of youth. And Mrs Adler — cool, incisive, argumentative; and Mrs Johnson, earnest and convincing. The Labour Movement has been waiting for Woman to come along and lend a hand . . . Without the women we struck the enemies of progress hard; with the women fighting by our sides we shall simply sweep them to their doom.\(^2\)

The election was one of the most orderly ever held — no drunken men, no quarrelling or fighting. Factory girls, however, reported intimidation by employers. They were either told not to vote or were threatened with the sack if they voted Labour. False rumours spread through factories warning of terrible consequences of a Labour victory. There was also confusion. Approached to come and register a vote, some would say, “But I haven’t any money” or “I am too poor to vote”. Others were too timid. It is not surprising that fewer than half the eligible women cast a vote at the non-compulsory early elections.

WWPO women lightly said that after the elections they hadn’t noticed themselves becoming unwomanly, and could still cook, sleep and sew. But suddenly the anti-suffrage arguments changed. Following a Labour victory in South Australia, the male conservative cry was that women agreed with the men too much and were therefore not fit to vote. What had happened to “If women get the vote there will be disharmony in the home”? asked the suffragists.

Vida Goldstein, who caused much interest when she stood as a Senate candidate in Victoria, polled well in the 1903 elections. But, asked the Worker, “How many votes would she have polled in Brisbane, where every second man, and almost every woman, says ‘I believe in women having the vote, but mind you not in them standing for Parliament’”?\(^2\)

Emma Miller, always recognised as a leader, found time during all this activity to become vice-president of the newly formed Brisbane Political Labour Council, a delegate council to strengthen and consolidate the labour forces in the Brisbane area. But when the WWPO held its first annual meeting, she asked to be allowed to rest on her laurels and Mrs L. Adler was elected president in her place. Emma joined Mrs Ramsey and Miss Hyland as vice-presidents, Mrs Culpin became treasurer, and Kate Collings
remained as secretary. Kate caused much amusement when she called for the abolition of the bar in Parliament House. She said she had seen road workers being provided with billies of tea by their wives and children and she couldn't see why the parliamentarians could not be provided with a similar service.

The challenge continues

NSW suffragists wept for joy when in July 1902, the State Bill granting them the suffrage was finally passed. In 1903 it was the turn of Tasmanian women, but Queensland and Victoria had to continue their campaigning.

The fight continued in 1904 but there was a feeling that it would not be long before Queensland women would be considered fit to cast a vote in a state election. In March, Emma Miller delivered a paper on A Century of Women's Rights, to a WEFA meeting. She said that all progress of women dated from the past one hundred years, that the rights of all women to education and paid work, and of married women to own property and be guardians of their children, were first recognised during this period, as was their right to municipal and political franchises. "Although not all have been translated into law, the honours of war are with us", she said. She concluded: "One hundred years ago every woman determined to marry at all costs as a means of existence, but nowadays we rarely marry until we can support a husband".25

In 1904, the WEFA lost two of its most constant male supporters, Joseph Silver Collings Snr and the Hon. William Browne. Commenting on Collings' death the Worker womens page said that he had attended every WEFA meeting because, he said, he loved all rebels.26 The women considered he possessed a true chivalry based on recognition of their rights, not on condescension. During the formation of the WWPO he had been their guide, philosopher and friend. The death of "Billy" Browne was a great blow. It created much concern because the Electoral Reform Bill was then before Parliament. The suffragists said that his familiar voice on behalf of women was going to be missed and that his name should go on the honours list of the suffrage roll of fame. A memorial headstone was erected in his memory in Toowong Cemetery in 1905.
The 1904 annual meeting of the WEFA led to the election of the same officials, with the addition of Miss Tracey as press correspondent. Those elected to council were Mesdames Johnson, Collings Senr (Mary Ann), Collings Jnr (Kate) Ralston, Kunze, Dulley, Macfarlane, Dick, Bradford, Ince, Daniels, Dunlop, Ramsey, Xenos, and Thiodon (mistress of ceremonies for socials) and Miss Ralston. The size of the council indicates a growth in membership and the development of new leaders.

Conservative parliamentarians continued to be insulting to the suffragists and to women as a whole. When the Hon. F.T. Brentnall stated in the Legislative Council that the possession of the franchise would bring women down to the “level of the lowest common prostitute” the WEFA reacted with the following letter: May 31 1904

Sir,

On behalf of the WEF Association, I beg to enter a protest against the criticism delivered by you in the Legislative Council on the extension of the franchise to the women of this State. Also to remind you that a time may come when the members will be elected to that Chamber by the voice of the people, and the women who have been so grossly insulted by you will rejoice in the opportunity of relegating such as you, sir, to the obscurity from which you should never have emerged.

Yours etc.,

L. ADLER
Vice-President of the W.E.F.A., Brisbane

Brentnall, referred to as the leader of the anti-suffragists, had also stated that he had his own opinions as to where the duties, responsibilities and functions of women lay.

When a candidate in the Murilla electorate said he had no opinion on the vote, but “I like the ladies — it will come”, the suffragists told him in no uncertain terms that they didn’t want his insulting gallantries; it was time he learnt that women had a “right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”. Earlier George Thorn, MLA, referred to as “the old squire of dames”, had classified women into five groups, “the plain, the ugly, the pretty, the beautiful and the lovable”, and stated that only the first two classes desired the vote. He told a gathering at Crows Nest that although he opposed the vote for women, he considered widows deserved it. The women’s reaction was that “certainly no obsta-
Many suffragists continued to concern themselves with other issues affecting women; southern sweaters were arriving in Brisbane attracted by the lower wages paid compared with those in Sydney — twenty shillings a week in Sydney and twelve shillings and sixpence in Brisbane; landlords owed rent were seizing typewriters and sewing machines essential to women trying to make a living from home. "Turn the hose on them" was one piece of advice offered the women. Girls returning from their day's work only to begin a new round of domestic duties from which men were free were finding that this increased the difficulties of those who desired to attend technical classes.

The age of consent for girls was still twelve and of continuing concern to Queensland women. A leaflet, written by May McC- onnel on behalf of the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, explained that a girl could not marry until she was eighteen when she could also dispose of her property. At twelve she was "at liberty to dispose of herself" and become the mother of an illegitimate child, and her only recourse was to sue the father. A deputation to the Government urged that Queensland law be brought into line with that of South Australia where the age of consent was seventeen and the State cared for deserted mothers and sued the absconding fathers. (It was not until 1913 that the age of consent in Queensland was raised to seventeen.)

In 1903 Labour, with William Kidston as leader, had entered into a coalition with Sir Arthur Morgan's Liberals, and in late 1904, an Electoral Franchise Bill was introduced to bring Queensland into line with the federal franchise. It was opposed in the Legislative Council (referred to in Labour circles as the "slaughterhouse of reform") because it was not accompanied by a machinery bill. A citizen's indignation meeting was called in protest at this rejection, with Mrs Adler and Emma Miller the main speakers.

An amended bill introduced at a special session in January 1905 was debated over a period of three weeks. Now that women had registered their first federal vote, the conservatives had no logical reasons for excluding them from the franchise. All the political
parties could see that they could gain from women’s enfranchise-
ment, particularly as each had its own women’s political group to
assist with electioneering. Most members now accepted the one
adult-one vote concept, made inevitable because of the absence of
the plural vote from the Commonwealth Constitution. The main
discussion centred around where a vote should be cast — at the
place of residence or in the electorate in which the property or
business was located. Some conservatives were concerned that
the bill would “enfranchise almost double the number of adults”,
while making “no provision for anything like equity in
representation”, and stressed the need for the bill to be accom-
panied by a redistribution bill.

The debate bogged down over the question of the postal vote,
by which voters could register a vote only in the presence of a
postmaster. The Opposition claimed this requirement discrimi-
nated against the women of the outback who would find it just as
difficult to travel to a post office as to a polling booth. One mem-
der even suggested that women wouldn’t vote without a postal
vote because of the drunkenness and profane language at polling
booths. Commented the Worker’s women’s page, “MLA Forrest
says that at best the polling booth is a rough and tumble affair, not
fitted for a woman to enter. As men dispense law and order, what
sort of advertisement is that for them?” The final outcome was
that a Justice of the Peace (JP) “may attest a ballot paper, but must
then return it to the voter; and the voter, who is supposed not to
be able to go to the postmaster on account of distance or some
other drawback, has to go to the post office and post his ballot
paper”. Commenting on this measure, Peter Airey, MLA, said it
was not only a defect, but “carries with it an element of positive
absurdity”. Conservative members, Thynne and Brentnall ob-
structed the passage of the bill, and Brentnall urged that “the fran-
chise should not be extended to a certain class of degraded
women”.

Finally on 25 January 1905, the Elections Act Amendment Bill
was passed by both Houses thus enfranchising an estimated
100,000 women. It gave a political voice to men and women over
twenty-one who had lived in Queensland for twelve months. It
was no longer necessary to have resided six months in an elector-
ate — a provision that in the past had prevented thousands of itinerant bushworkers from being enfranchised. Plural voting was abolished. Women, however, were still not allowed to stand for Parliament. "I am pleased to be able to say that the passing of the new bill appears to have given great satisfaction to the advocates of women's suffrage", said Home Secretary Peter Airey.

A special ceremony was held at Parliament House one evening soon after the bill was passed. Labour member Ryland introduced the women suffrage activists to Premier Morgan. Among those present were Mesdames Adler, Higgs, Culpin, Burton, Reinhold and Dunlop and Misses Tracey, Reinhold and Collings. Emma Miller was unable to be present as she was at the bedside of her good friend Mrs Fairman, who had been treasurer of the Woman's Equal Franchise Association from its inception.

"The franchise is achieved at last!" exclaimed the Worker, "The WEFA may hang their banners on the outer wall, and jubilate exceedingly. The Port Arthur of male dominance has fallen, and Major-General Brentnall is our prisoner of war. Woman has now the power in the land that Nature destined her to wield. Hoop-la! Things are going to begin to happen."

Congratulations flooded in. From Lilian Locke, womens secretary of the Melbourne Political Labour Council: "Very hearty and warm congratulations to all Labour sisters on the victory just achieved over the State Franchise . . . We are extremely glad that our sisters in the North have at last secured political freedom — even though it leaves us in the degrading position of being the only women in the Commonwealth who cannot claim the rights of State citizenship." It was not until 1908 that Victorian women achieved the franchise.

"Woman's hour has come! Will she seize it? Will she be true to the highest impulse of her nature and vote for Home Protection?" asked the WCTU's president, Mrs Williams, at its annual convention. With no further need of a Suffrage Department, it was suggested that the WCTU appoint an electoral superintendent with duties to advise and instruct in the best methods of arousing women and interesting them in political and moral questions, and their responsibility as individuals to use their vote. Commented Mrs Williams: "Let it not be supposed that woman's vote alone
can effect reforms . . . But good men and women, by joining is­

sues can control and direct legislations on great moral and social ques­

tions and can mould the character and destiny of our State and Nation.” She went on to quote from Tennyson’s “The Princess”

For woman’s cause is man’s: they
rise or sink
Together dwarf’d or godlike, bond
or free.

(This was also the slogan of the Womanhood Suffrage League of New South Wales.)

The Worker paid tribute to Emma Miller:

If anyone in Queensland deserves special recognition by the women of this State, in this hour of triumph, it is Mrs Emma Miller, President of the W.E.F.A.; the Grand Old Lady who has for years been their trusted and tireless leader in the battle for the franchise. Mrs Miller’s energy and enthusiasm would put women half her years to the blush. She has laboured long and zealously, and not only for the Women’s vote — wherever Progress has needed a faithful worker or an earnest voice she has been there every time. In doing honour to her the women of Queensland would do honour to themselves.

Tribute was also paid to Leontine Cooper. The Worker said that her friends would regret that this pioneer woman suffragist had not lived to see the vote granted to Queensland women: “Mrs Cooper wanted the vote at any price and she did not see eye to eye with Labour women, but she kept the suffrage flag flying by the spoken and written word for many years”.

The special section for children in the Worker explained the new Franchise Bill,

Dear Children,

Freedom is not humping bluey just now in Queensland, but is hav­

ing a look round in town. Every woman over 21 in this State, and there are nearly 100,000 of us, has a vote now and counts one like a man, because the Franchise Bill is law, and no man or woman counts for more than one, because the property vote is not a law now. No one will ever have ten votes at an election here again just because he has grabbed ten allotments of land. These two reforms will make this State a good place to live in when you are grown up, so play “All round the mulberry bush” as much as you like now.

Reminiscing in later years, a suffragist said that embarrassment
at being called “battleaxes” and the opposition of some husbands to their wives’ involvement had caused some women to withdraw, but most were committed and carried on regardless. Mrs Sampson, who was a foundation member of the Franchise Association, said that the indifference and opposition of many women for whom they were fighting rendered the fight more difficult than it should have been, but Mrs Miller’s leadership helped to spur the movement on. The WEFA later presented Emma Miller with an illuminated address in appreciation of her leadership.

A story was told of Emma’s being introduced in March 1905 by Mr Thynne to William Redmond. Mr Thynne had been one of the main parliamentarians obstructing the passage of the Franchise Bill. “I am glad to tell you Mr Redmond that at last the women of Queensland have a vote,” said Mrs Miller. “And with my help,” added Thynne. In its report of the incident, the Worker wrote, “You could see the old war horse pawing at once. ‘And in spite of the obstruction of the Hon. Mr Thynne and his friends’, said Mrs Miller loudly.”

Visiting New Zealand with her husband in 1907, Mrs Ramsay Macdonald told a New Zealand meeting, “I naturally feel rather forlorn at these Australian and New Zealand gatherings, as being the only adult person who is not supposed to be fit to use a vote.”

Women had made the first dent in the armour of male supremacy. Parliamentarians and political parties were forced to consider women’s interests and frame policies to woo their votes. At last, the other half of the population had to be recognised.

Suffragists had learnt a lot from the campaign. They learnt how to organise a campaign; to appreciate the importance of winning mass support through petitions, meetings, door-to-door and factory approaches; and to reach out and educate people, convincing them of the correctness of a cause. They used what they learnt in election campaigns, trade-union activities and the dramatic anti-conscription campaigns of the First World War.

During the suffrage campaign Emma Miller had established herself as a prominent and forthright personality with recognised leadership qualities, and was now known throughout the colony. She had taught women to think and not to accept their second class position in society but rather to challenge it. Through her
leadership women realised that they had the power to change society and the conventions that chained them to the past. They now looked through a wider window at other issues confronting women and became active in campaigns to improve the quality of women’s lives.

Emma always looked at life through a wide window and while involved in the suffrage campaign was also involved in other issues and organisations. She was a member of the Social Democratic Vanguard (SDV), formed in 1890 to popularise the theories of world socialists, at one stage sharing the position of vice-president with John Huxham. A special appeal to women to aid in financing the project was opened by a donation from the Woman’s Equal Franchise Association. One SDV tract, *Women and the Social Problem* showed how women’s economic dependence on men had been and still was the cause of their moral and social enslavement. The SDV saw one citizen—one vote and one vote only as first and foremost of their demands. An article in the *Worker* in 1904 listed what it considered to be the necessary stages on the way to “socialism in our time”: shorter hours so men and women have time to think, better sanitation and better homes, wider streets, easier and cheaper transit, purer food and healthier occupations, freer land, happier homes and cleaner lives.47

At the SDV rooms in Albert Street, Emma Miller read a paper on Natural Equality. She said that the Egyptians had a playful habit of carving bas-reliefs of their rulers ten feet high that towered over their pygmy-sized subjects. The purpose was to keep the rabble warm in their folly of king worship and prevent them from tearing up the throne by the roots: “The old tradition lingers, but the shock when we strike a royalty looking worth ‘7s. 6d. greatly reduced’ lingers on”.48 (This is thought to have been a reference to Edward VII.)

In April 1906, Emma’s son George Calderwood married Jean Macfie, a cousin of Kate’s husband, Alex Macfie. Their first baby, Emma, died before reaching her first birthday, and a few years later, Emma Miller moved from Kangaroo Point to live with George and his wife at Craig Street, Red Hill.
Studio photograph of the family soon after their arrival. Seated: William Calderwood, Emma Calderwood (Miller). Standing: Mary (Polly), Kate and George. (Courtesy Peg Peters)

George Calderwood's wife, Sarah Jane (Jean) outside their home at Craig Street, Red Hill, in 1912. Similar houses still exist in the street. (Courtesy Peg Peters)
Emma Miller (second from left, front row) with other committee members of the Clothing Trade Union, Female Branch, 1908 (*Worker*, 31 October 1908)

Emma Miller and Kate Dwyer with other delegates at the Fourth Commonwealth Political Labour Conference, Brisbane 1908 (*Worker*, 11 June 1908)
Some leading Labour Women

Some leading Labour Women (Worker, 1 June 1907)
Women lining up behind Emma Miller prior to marching to Parliament House on Black Friday 1912 (Queenslander, 10 February 1912)

Clothing industry girls, Black Friday (Queenslander, 10 February 1912)
The Specials in formation ready for the fray — Black Friday 1912 (Courtesy John Oxley Library)
Australian Women's Peace Army Calendar, 1917 (Courtesy Clarrie Beckingham)
George Calderwood with daughter, Peg (Courtesy Peg Peters)
Ray Dempsey, past Secretary of the Trades and Labor Council with Peg Peters on the day she viewed the marble bust of her grandmother for the first time since attending the unveiling when she was three years old (Photograph by David Hinchcliffe)
Eight

Did Emma Miller somersault?

That all men be allowed to share their leisure,
Nor thousands slave that one may seek his pleasure.
Who on the golden rule shall dare exist.
Behold in [her] a Socialist.

_Ella Wheeler Wilcox_¹

In October 1906, at 67, an age when most women were expected to sit back and relax, Emma Miller set out on an organising tour of centres along the western railway line to Cunnamulla, stopping at different centres on the return journey. She was the first woman ever to undertake a tour of the west organising for Labour. As the tour was made under the auspices of the Australian Workers’ Union (AWU), William Breen, secretary of the Charleville branch, undertook its organisation. Ill health had forced Breen to give up shearing and become a union official, but he still longed for the days of freedom he had once enjoyed with his mates. Nevertheless he proved to be a capable organiser: as well as organising in the towns he wrote to outlying shearing sheds, such as Nive Downs, Dynever, Bundaleer and Tilboroo, informing his union contacts that Emma Miller had been connected with the labour movement since its inception and that it was confidently expected that she would do a wonderful amount of good work organising the newly enfranchised women.

His letters tended to concentrate on her age, describing her, for example, as an “old veteran” or “old lady”. When the Mitchell WPO asked to have Emma Miller visit them, he replied that he knew of nothing to prevent the “old lady complying with their wishes”.² He then sent posters to advertise her visit and promised to send to Mitchell the used admission tickets from the Charleville social, which he believed could come in handy. To Mrs Lynch of Tilboroo he wrote, “[Mrs Miller] is not by any means an orator . . . She is sixty-seven years of age and has always worked in the
cities and her projected tour in the country will be the crowning of her labours in the interests of Labour\(^3\).

In a letter to ALF secretary, Albert Hinchcliffe he explained that each local AWU branch would pay for her first class train travel and her hotel accommodation: “She will be made as comfortable as possible”\(^4\).

Emma’s reputation was well known to the westerners who pictured her as they had so often heard her described — a forceful personality with strong convictions and ceaseless energy and dedication to the cause. So when the train pulled into the station, they were amazed to see a tiny, frail-looking elderly woman step onto the platform. “They were disappointed I was not a big, stout woman”, she said\(^5\).

Although state member Reinhold and the Hon, J. Page (federal member for the district) accompanied Emma for part of the tour, reports concentrated on her speeches. The Roma report stated that “Mr Page also had a great reception, and delivered one of his characteristic rattling speeches”\(^6\). Enthusiastic reports flooded into the *Worker* from Roma, Charleville, Mitchell, Amby and Cunnamulla; they told of large meetings, the favourable reception of Emma’s speeches, and the formation of new branches of WWPO.

It was the time of the Labour-Liberal coalition of Kidston and Morgan, with the Labourite Kidston as Premier. Kidston, though had disagreed with two decisions of the 1905 Queensland Labour-in-Politics Conference — continued opposition to the sale of crown lands and the adoption of a socialistic objective. As Emma herself was incapable of deviating from Labour principles and had no time for those lacking the same steadfast convictions, she denounced Kidston unmercifully in her speeches. (Kidston resigned from the Labour Party in 1907.)

Emma’s first meeting was at Roma where, despite threatening weather and almost impassable roads, she attracted a large crowd. For half an hour the Hibernian Band played and then Mayor, Alderman Conlon introduced her to the audience saying, “[She] must have the Cause at heart to come so far into the country to fight for it”.\(^7\) Emma replied that it had long been her wish to come out west, and that she would like to go right into the shearing
sheds. She spoke at length on the federal political situation and referred to all three Labour Senate candidates as “tried men” and described one, who had worked for Labour for many years, as a “straight goer”. She stressed the importance of making a careful choice and nominating straight candidates — “men who had fought for them in the past, and had not come into their ranks on the eve of an election”. She spoke for an hour, then stayed until dancing ended at midnight; she left for Charleville the following morning.

For her meeting, “all Charleville assembled at the School of Arts”, and Emma who, it was said, had “become about twenty years younger since visiting the West”, soon let the meeting know the brand of politics she advocated. “It was fine to hear the manner in which that frail old woman castigated the Kerr and Kidston type of politician”, William Breen wrote. She said she wished she were fifty years younger so she could make an extended tour throughout the state and “assist in casting into oblivion those wasters of the P.L.P. who had broken their platform and ratted on the Party”, and asked the women of Charleville what they had done or were doing, now the franchise was won, to get a desirable representative into parliament. She told them that “they had their ‘Patsy’ now, and he was no good to them, and she wanted them to take her advice and replace him by a straight Labour man at the next elections”.

She ended by asking the women to meet her at the AWU offices the following night with the purpose of forming a womens organisation, and stressed how important it was that Charleville Labour women should become an organised body. The social that followed the meeting continued until 4 a.m. At the meeting later that day a provisional committee was appointed and “Mrs Miller expressed herself as highly pleased with the manner in which the Charleville women entered into the thing, and predicted a great future for the organisation”.

William Breen considered it the best meeting ever held in the town and said that “old Mother Miller made a splendid impression”. To Hinchcliffe he wrote: “Mrs Miller had a great and glorious time in Charleville. She made a tremendous number of friends during her short stay in town.” Referring to the gen-
eral belief that the tour had made her years younger, Breen told of having taken Emma for a walk around the town: “She soon had me knocked up. I passed her on to a strong lump of a woman who could keep somewhere near her.” Obviously his picture of Emma Miller as an “old woman” who was “by no means an orator” had changed. He was enthusiastic about the attendance at the social: “Imagine the number of people . . . 93 couples stood up in the first dance”.

The finance report for her tour included an intriguing item — “bell ringing and posting, one pound”. “Posting” would have referred to the numerous posters advertising Emma’s visit, and it is likely that the bell ringing was used to announce the beginning of her meetings, a custom dating back to early English days.

In Mitchell “there were roses, roses all the way. Mrs Miller had flowers, selections by the Town Band, variations on the piano, and cheers from Labourites. What more could the heart of a Socialist woman desire, unless it was the glad sight of the number of women who joined the W.P.O. at the conclusion of the meeting”? The friends who visited her were “captivated by her motherly ways”. She spoke in Boyle’s Hall to the largest political meeting ever held in Mitchell — “old hands say that it was a record one . . . Mrs Miller on rising was greeted with a deafening roar of cheers.” Again she stressed the importance of selecting a straight, sober and honest candidate for the state election. Speaking on the federal political situation, she urged the audience to “leave no stone unturned to secure the return of the pledged Labour men to both the Senate and House of Representatives”. She was especially severe on those members of the state party who had “violated their pledges and platform”. Fifty women came forward after the meeting to join WWPO, and again a dance followed until the small hours of the morning.

At the open-air meeting in front of the Federal Hotel in Amby, Emma, “the popular lady organiser”, stressed the importance of educating people to stand together in support of unionism and their political organisation. Not content with speaking at public meetings, Emma also canvassed house to house, encouraging women “to remember their cause” when election time came around. She met with a good response, the feeling being summed
up by the Worker’s Amby correspondent: ‘‘It is the wish of all that she may enjoy long life to agitate the cause of Labour to a good and successful issue’’.19

Frank Brennan, secretary of the Cunnamulla WPO reported that at that town’s meeting Emma Miller had denounced Kidston and Airey as platform breakers and left no doubt that she supported the socialist platform of the 1905 conference. She showed clearly that it was the people’s duty to make themselves worthy of good and honest representation. After stating that Emma had more than fulfilled their best expectations, he stressed that the organisation would be pleased to ‘‘welcome any such honest and energetic worker for the Movement in the future’’. In a postscript, he wrote that ‘‘Mrs Miller formed a Women’s WPO today and about 30 names were registered and the whole thing was a success’’.20

On 29 October Emma wired from Cunnamulla, ‘‘Good meetings. The people right. Leave for Charleville to-morrow. Three other meetings. Miles first.’’21

Imagine then the shock to Emma Miller and her friends and supporters to read in the Daily Mail a few days later of her ‘‘Alleged Socialistic Somersault’’.22 The story had come from the paper’s Charleville correspondent. Fearing the snowballing growth of the labour movement in the west and the growing support for Labour candidates as a result of Emma’s campaigning, the opposition sought to discredit her and confuse her supporters. The report said:

Mrs Miller, who arrived here from Brisbane as a champion in the cause of socialism, has suddenly turned round and become a follower of Mr Kidston, whom about a fortnight ago she denounced at the School of Arts here, and was very antagonistic regarding him. She has carried her views to such an extent that she has left the hotel known as the Workers’ Hotel, and gone to the Carriers’ Arms Hotel, well-known to be in sympathy with Kidston.23

It claimed that William Breen, when approached by the paper, had said that ‘‘he was reluctant to say much against Mrs Miller’s political somersault owing to the lady’s advanced age; but that he had for eight months arranged her Western tour . . . and he felt disgusted at the turn of events’’.24 The article concluded by stating that a great (unnamed) Labour sympathiser had said,
"Well, after this, I go on my own; I thought Mrs Miller was a sort of fortune-teller when I heard her in the School of Arts here about three weeks ago". *(The Brisbane Courier carried a similar article)*. *Daily Mail* comment in the same day’s issue gives an insight into local recognition of Emma Miller as a leader of the labour movement — recognition not apparent in previous local newspaper reports that rarely, if ever, referred to her:

Everybody who knows Mrs Miller must admire her, despite her advanced years. She is earnest and active in the good cause of political regeneration, and she has just crowned a long and useful career by insisting, at Charleville, on the right of private judgment despite the dictum of the Labour organisations . . . Mrs Miller is primarily a true woman, and only secondarily a Labour propagandist. Therefore she has courageously transferred her allegiance from Turbot-street to the Treasury Buildings, and shaken off the dust from her feet against the socialist organisations. This is good news, for it will encourage our valiant if inconsistent Premier, just as it will fill the Trades Hall with dismay. The western organisations, which have practically wrecked the cause of labour, were based upon the disloyal sentiment of the 1891 strike, and the Turbot-street junto has ever since lived upon that unfortunate blunder from the respectable working man’s standpoint . . . So now we may have regenerated labour in Queensland in the form of a constitutional Radical party, and the revolutionary junto with its seditious organisations will fall to pieces. Well done, Mrs Miller! With all thy faults the people of Queensland will love thee still! 26

Mr David Espie, of Charleville, set out to correct the misrepresentation in the reports. He wrote to the *Worker*: “Mrs Miller on her first visit to Charleville stayed at the Victoria Hotel; there is no hotel in Charleville called the ‘Workers’ Hotel’”. He explained that her return visit had been a private one, honouring a promise to stay with Mrs George Espie, and that the “Lady Kidstonite admirer” who drove her around town was his wife, the president of the local WWPO. 27 Espie denied he was a declared Kidstonite: although at first he had mistakenly supported Kidston, believing that he would redeem his political principles, he had since become disillusioned by him. Eventually both papers had to retract their reports. In its headline, the *Daily Mail* declared “MRS MILLER STAUNCH” but still impenitent, it declared there were grounds for its impeachment of Emma Miller. It said “that Mrs Miller remains staunch to her principles no one who has watched her will doubt” 28 but insisted that she had not
found the works and ways of the western organisations in harmony with her principles and “found it necessary for the good of the cause to repudiate what she probably deemed to be innovations”. But it also published a copy of a wire from Emma Miller to Albert Hinchcliffe: “Charleville correspondent absolutely incorrect. Emphatically deny statement. Staunch as when I left Brisbane. Splendid meetings everywhere.”

“[They tried to] scare seven years growth out of us last week with the yarn that Mrs Miller had gone in a curve and renounced straight Labour”, said the Worker’s womens page. “But everyone who knows our gallant little organiser laughed at the idea.”

Others, including Joe Collings and people from the centres she had visited, rushed to her defence. The Worker denounced the report as a malicious and mischievous fabrication and said that though unable to reach Mrs Miller by wire it would stake its repu-
MRS. MILLER’S SOMERSAULT.

To the Editor of the Daily Mail.

Sir,—In reference to the statements made by your Charleville correspondent in your issues of the 24th and 25th instant, concerning the alleged somersaulting of Mrs. E. Miller, who is on an extended tour in the South-western districts of the state at the invitation of the Labour organisation, I should be glad if you will be good enough to publish the following copy of a wire received by me this morning from Mrs. E. Miller, dated from Cunnamulla, 10 a.m., 25th instant:—"Charleville correspondent absolutely incorrect. Emphatically deny statement. Staunch as when I left Brisbane. Splendid meetings everywhere. (Signed) Mrs. Miller."

Thanking you in anticipation.—I am, Sir, etc., ALBERT HINCHCLIFFE.
Brisbane October 25

Letter from Albert Hinchcliffe, to Daily Mail, 26 October 1906

atation on her loyalty: “[The Worker] knows her too well to give a moment’s credence to such rubbish”.31

After her Cunnamulla meeting, a report to the Worker claimed that every person at her meeting was thoroughly satisfied that “Mrs Miller is true and loyal to the cause she has persistently advocated for so many years”.32 “Mrs Miller is built on the straight: she couldn’t go crooked if she tried”, added the women’s page.33

William Breen wrote to the editor of the Daily Mail on 26 October,

Permit me to contradict a false statement which appeared in your issue of 24th inst. Your Charleville correspondent in referring to Mrs Miller’s Western tour, states Mr W. Breen Secretary of the AWU was interviewed by a press correspondent in connection with the lady’s recent visit to Charleville. No such interview ever occurred, except in the mind of your correspondent — I trust in fairness to myself and Mrs Miller you will give the above denial the fullest publicity.34

To be accused of denouncing socialism, the cause for which
she had strived so sincerely and honestly for so long, was a bitter pill for Emma to swallow. Her hurt is obvious in the last words of the wire she sent to Albert Hinchcliffe, "Am upset. Write me." Emma came away full of pride and admiration for the women of the west. As well as those attending her meetings from the towns, families would have travelled long distances from remote areas to hear her speak.

Emma was honoured early in December with a welcome-home social organised by the Women's Labour Council. She gave an account of her journey, of the meetings, of the fine men and women she had met and of the "menagerie of three parrots and a 'possum, all Labour', with which she had been presented. She told the gathering that while walking around the western towns and their outskirts, she had been delighted to see the wildflowers that created a blaze of colour in the once bare plains. It was spring and the west was a veritable Garden of Eden — there were everlasting daisies, pink, white and bright yellow, lilies and the puce-coloured Darling pea. The sight revived childhood memories of faraway Chesterfield, for the paddocks reminded her of English fields in the spring.

Emma was also honoured by the newly formed female branch of the North Brisbane WPO. She was touched to receive a letter from them informing her that in recognition of her dedication to Labour principles they had made her their first honorary woman member.

In 1907 Emma returned to Charleville to attend the annual meeting of the local AWU. The only report of this visit states that after being introduced as a pioneer of the labour movement, she thanked the meeting for the hearty welcome extended to her and spoke in "most suitable terms". At this meeting, the expense account for her 1906 tour was presented. The total expenses amounted to £24.16s.7d., and a refund of 18 shillings from Mrs Miller was acknowledged.

Rejuvenated by the growth of the movement in the west, Emma became involved in yet another election campaign — the one in which Queensland women were to cast their votes in a state
election, on 18 May 1907. Once again the women activists set out
to win votes for their respective political parties. QWEL wrote:

We are making history, and it is in the power of every individual
woman to have an influence upon that history . . . our sisters in other
parts of the world are yet struggling for the privilege we possess, and
they are watching with eager eyes to see how we discharge our
trust”.

QWEL members worked actively for the Philp conservative
candidates in the election, appealing to women as they had in the
1903 federal election, to vote for “men whom you believe to be
men of honour, men of business capacity, who have given proof
by the way in which they manage their own affairs, that they have
the ability to manage yours”. QWEL had achieved independ­
dence from the male liberal political structures by 1906, and men
were no longer members of the organisation. Their policy began
to reflect a more feminist ideology, but they still took part in se­
lecting suitable candidates for the NLU.

Labour women threw all their energy and enthusiasm into the
campaign. After all, they had agitated for a decade for this democ­
ocratic right. According to the Daily Mail, however, the labour
movement was split into “Kidstonites, labour aspirants or out­
right socialists”. Emma Miller spoke at socialist rallies, and
toured nearby country areas at the invitation of the Crows Nest
WWPO. In Toowoomba, after being warned that there might be a
fraudulent Labour candidate in their midst, she exposed him at a
public meeting. She rebuked him so severely that he sneaked out
of the meeting, and eventually retired from the contest. Not con­
tent to leave attendance to her meeting at Howard to chance, she
canvassed from door to door and succeeded in having sixty
women turn up.

Back in Brisbane, she collected the names of women pledged to
vote Labour — two hundred and fifty in all — while Mrs Collings
canvassed forty-eight streets and Miss Bowman thirty-five. At one
house a woman came to the door still holding the shirt she had
been sewing for a paltry sum of twopence halfpenny. “Don’t stop
me!”, she said, “or I won’t be able to pay the rent”.

Helen Huxham and Isabella Skirving had an added interest: both their husbands were standing as candidates, and each spoke
at the meetings of the other’s husband, Mrs Skirving once vice-

did Emma Miller somersault? 151

president of the Shop Assistants Union, was a very capable

speaker, “a born banner bearer for Labour”. Helen Huxham ad-

ressed a group of women at Wesley Church whose organisation,

Sisters of the People, had come across distressing cases of poverty

when visiting sick women and babies. The Worker’s women’s

page thought the church women “should demand socialism after

hearing Mrs Huxham’s remedy for poverty”.41

On election day, women predominated at the booths. The

Daily Mail felt moved to comment that the “women as a body,
exercised the franchise intelligently”42 — that is, after joking

about incidents showing that a few women were confused by the

unaccustomed experience. Women were also prominent among

the three thousand people who lined the streets in Fortitude

Valley eagerly awaiting the results of the poll. Labour women,

however, were to be disappointed, for in spite of their efforts a

Conservative government was returned.

In Longreach, a special tribute was paid to the Women’s Polit­i-

cal Labour League whose activities in conjunction with the AWU

had led to the return of Labour candidate, Jack Payne, with a

splendid majority. In spite of heavy rain, women had gone on

foot, and driven buggies and sulkies around the outskirts of the
town to bring women to the polling booth: “There was no place
too far, and no road or street too muddy! No one knew their
strength until that day!” On election night women remained in

the street at midnight discussing the state of the poll.43 With most

of the successful Labour candidates coming from country areas

and only one from Brisbane, the Longreach AWU was critical of

the lack of organisation in Brisbane which had not achieved the

“splendid victory” of the western areas and suggested: “[Coastal
towns should] stir themselves up a bit . . . Still we have people

coming instructing western workers how to organise politically

and in other ways.”44 (Emma Miller had not visited Longreach.)

The Longreach Women’s Political Labour League, an active

body of women with M.V. Hoskin as their secretary, had worked

closely with the AWU, which allowed them free use of their hall.
The league worked as an auxiliary for unions, raising finance for

strikes and holding benefits for those in need. The League pro-
tested against "Federal Labour representatives in Queensland voting an increase in their salaries without first obtaining their respective constituencies opinion". They also strongly opposed "high duties being placed on the necessities of life" although they were in "sympathy with protection".

In her annual report, Mrs Williams, president of the WCTU, said that during the election Queensland women had given ample evidence of their deep interest in politics and that for months the various political organisations of women had been busy setting forth the advantages of individual candidates, losing sight sometimes of the real issues in their enthusiasm. She considered they did much good in "awakening interest and arousing indifferent and careless ones". The forecast of male rudeness in speech and conduct at booths had not eventuated, she said: "Even when members of families voted differently, there were none of the unhappy scenes predicted by alarmists... when results were displayed there was great toleration and good humour abroad".

The WCTU was particularly disappointed with the defeat of Home Secretary Peter Airey, mainly as a result of a strong campaign against him by the Licensed Victuallers Association who feared he would introduce a Liquor Bill. And Mrs Williams stressed that the association's members wanted as MPs:

Men whom lust for office cannot kill.
Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy.
Men who possess opinions and a will.
Men who have honour, men who will not lie.

After all the debate over the postal vote, its first trial showed many inconsistencies and pointed to possible rigging of the vote. Under the heading "Abusing the Franchise", the Daily Mail commented on the large number of informal votes and expressed concern at what appeared to be the unscrupulous use of the postal vote. The election, it said, had "proved the postal vote as 'useful', but far from satisfactory;" it should either be abolished or much modified so that it would favour less the intrigue of the unscrupulous. Premier Kidston proposed eliminating the postal clauses, but QWEL objected, stating it was speaking on behalf of Queensland women. It advocated retaining postal voting and tightening up procedures. A Truth article said that QWEL had stated,
“truthfully enough, that in their canvassing crusades they always urged women to come to the poll if possible” and only suggested use of the postal vote in extreme situations. The problem, *Truth* stated, was with paid male canvassers who pressured women into casting a postal vote for his candidate. A deputation from the Brisbane Women’s Political Labour Council, with Emma Miller as its leader, denied that QWEL spoke on behalf of all women and called for the abolition of the postal vote.

Labour opposition to the postal vote was not new. The Labour Party had shown concern during the parliamentary debate on the 1905 Act: “There is nothing to deter a JP under the Act as it now stands, from becoming an electioneering agent pure and simple, and misusing the powers conferred upon him for partisan purposes.” And in the *Worker* on 4 February 1905, a woman writer had also expressed her view: “Personally I am opposed to postal voting for women; we can take our stand on equality and not favours. The Polling Booths are placed so conveniently now for voters that the postal vote is just pandering to the class of women who do not value a vote.”

With the possibility of another election in 1908, Labour women made the suggestion in their column in the *Worker* that they present the following resolution: “That during the period of the elections there be an abolition of washing-up, immediate stoppage of all further sales of washing tubs and frying pans and the establishment of co-op kitchens and laundries.” Not ones to rest on their laurels, however, these women were again very much part of the campaign. Emma Miller campaigned for Labour candidate Joe Collings, and at an open-air meeting at Stones Corner the women in the audience presented her with a bouquet of flowers and an address setting forth their appreciation of her services to socialism.

Attending Women’s Electoral League meetings was a favourite tactic of radical women during the election campaign. There they would challenge speakers to tell them what was so bad about socialism, very often stumping speakers. Sometimes their disruption would cause League meetings to end abruptly, much to the annoyance of the organisers.
Towards the end of January 1908, Emma attended a QWEL meeting in Paddington. The Worker reported:

[She heard such a] slanderous attack made on Socialism by the ladies and Deacon Barnes that she determined to call a meeting of Labour women to refute their lies, and pour a broadside into the slanderers. Unfortunately, the brave little Labour woman was unable to obtain a hall, and the idea had therefore to be abandoned. When Mrs Miller had a word with Deacon Barnes he said, "This female has been traducing me all over my electorate".

"Yes", said Mrs Miller, "and I'll continue to do it, but not as you traduce others, by telling lies about them; I'll traduce you by telling the truth about you!"54

The following week she was advocating equality of the sexes at Manly on Collings's platform when a man shouted, "Nonsense!" "How can it be nonsense", she asked, "when they can prove that equality by working to support their children and very often by working to keep their loafer husbands?" Commented the Worker's reporter, "The unmanly interjector was bowled out. He is one of those men who says that nature has not made women equal of man and expects his wife to work 24 hours a day."55

Queensland politics had become a series of "shifting alliances" since 1903 and there was "disillusionment with Kidston's betrayal" among Labour Party members and voters.56 Kidston, who now no longer associated with Labour, became premier after the election, leading the Liberals with Labour support.
In 1902 and 1903 unsuccessful attempts were made to form a tailoresses' union. By 1906 union organisation of working women became more urgent, particularly since, as stated in a *Worker* article in October, “sweating, and long working hours, and small pay, are still enjoying a long day out in Brisbane, thanks to the Upper House for rejecting the Factories Bill last week . . . it was in their power to give genuine relief to the workers, and Mr Brentnall recommended domestic service . . . unless a comet strikes the earth, sweating will last for some time yet.” At this time, Emma was organising in the west.

The following month the report of the Chief Inspector of Factories was released, showing that legislation was urgently needed to improve the working conditions of women. It referred to the fact that the hours worked overtime by women the previous year had greatly increased and far exceeded that worked by apprentices. The reason bluntly stated by the inspector was that women were not paid overtime while apprentices received sixpence an hour. The report also drew attention to the fact that the minimum wage had been defied, but only by the employers of girls. People still considered marriage was the solution for the sweated conditions of working women; when a speaker at a public meeting spoke of girls of twenty working in jam factories in Tasmania for six shillings a week, a male interjector shouted, "Why don't they get married?" "Perhaps you would recommend them to marry the young man of twenty-five in the same factories who are receiving 11s. per week?" replied the speaker.

When in February 1907, the Legislative Council rejected the
Listen, mother! The paper says, “An undoubted wave of prosperity is passing over Australia.” Isn’t it grand? (Worker, 23 May 1908)

Factories Act Amendment Bill with its provisions for paid overtime and free Saturday afternoons, the workers took to the city streets. Helen Huxham, Emma Miller and the Rev. Pollock addressed the crowd alongside the trade union leaders. They were greatly disappointed that only five women had marched, and Helen Huxham appealed to the workers to unite for the common good, stressing the urgent need to involve women. “Where are your wives and daughters?” she asked. Commented the Worker’s womens page: “The man who can’t influence two women has missed his mark. The Antis can influence their womenfolk to go to political meetings with them, and the unionist who lets an Anti
beat him is past hope." In a left sectarian refrain born of frustration and impatience it suggested that the women workers deserved the conditions the marchers were protesting against: "In fact a dose of work every night until eleven o'clock would make the wheels of their brains go round faster".

Isabella Hyland (later Skirving), vice-president of the Shop Assistants' Union, suggested that the women's absence might be due to the fact that many women workers had had to work back. Since everyone at the meeting was "fizzling like a hot cooking stove", the hardship the women were suffering could well be appreciated. She also drew attention to the hard lot of the female apprentice who, she said, "serves one month for nothing, is discharged, serves another month for nothing at her next place, is discharged again; and perhaps goes to a hundred different places serving a month for nothing. It is about time the law stopped making a practical joke of an apprentice like that."  

Emma Miller, in a vigorous speech, pointed out the importance of the wise use of their votes: "We need never expect to get justice from men who only legislate in the interests of property", she stressed. Labour women referred to Emma as the Louise Michel of the Queensland movement, and complained that she and other women speakers were seldom reported and were given little encouragement.

The union movement now set out once more to organise working women. Mary O'Brien was appointed organiser for the Trades and Labour Council and she, with Mesdames Huxham, Skirving (nee Hyland) and Finney set out to form a female factory employees union. Emma Miller again went to the west at the invitation of the Charleville WWPO, which she had helped found in 1906. Realising that a personal approach was necessary, the women set out for the factories with bundles of literature. If an employer refused them entry and became abusive they would harangue passers-by about his attitude. Realising that these were accomplished speakers who could damage their businesses, the employers became more conciliatory, and gleefully, the organisers made the most of the access they were given. They chatted to the workers, convincing them of the importance of attending a public meeting to form an urgently needed union.
In some places where the organisers asked for permission to speak to the girls in their own time, bosses assumed ignorance, saying they did not know where in the building the girls assembled for lunch. A few enlightened proprietors welcomed unionism, believing it would not only help the girls, but would also protect reputable employers from the cutthroat actions of the sweater. Some of the girls were timorous but the majority were in favour of organisation.

Reporting a meeting held on 14 July 1907, Truth headed its article: “Female Factoryites. BRISBANE’S SWEATED START OFF 500 STRONG. United We Stand, Divided We are Most Outrageously Exploited”. It paid tribute to Mary O’Brien who had been “around among the girls” and Mesdames Skirving, Huxham, Finney, Miller and Delaney who had assisted her — “these unselfish Labor women, who have really nothing material to gain by striving to better the conditions of their sweated sisters” — and said that the big roll-up and the enthusiasm was excellent testimony to the good organising of the women and the Trades and Labour Council that had planned the move to form a women’s union.

Called upon to move the first resolution, Helen Huxham outlined their organising experiences and expressed their delight at the large attendance before moving that a “Brisbane Female Factory Operatives Union be formed forthwith, and that all present pledge themselves to give it their energetic support by becoming members, and inducing their workmates to join”. In seconding the motion, Emma Miller complimented the organisers on their very effective work, as was shown by the large attendance, and told the audience: “We try to help you all we know how, but it is now for you to help yourselves by forming the only thing that will better your working conditions — a good strong union”.

The leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party, Dave Bowman, compared conditions in Brisbane with those in Sydney where the Tailoresses’ Union flourished. He told the women, “You can have the same here, but can only obtain it by uniting together”. He concluded by saying that the Labour Party would never rest until their promised wages boards were made law. W.P. Colborne (president of the Trades and Labour Council) was elected presi-
dent pro tem and Isabella Skirving secretary; as well, there was a committee of nine of the newly formed Female Factory Operatives Union.

In September 1907 Truth drew attention to the numbers of young factory girls and shopgirls sitting in the women's gallery of the Legislative Assembly on nights when bills affecting industrial legislation were being discussed. It attributed their interest to the effective organising of Mary O'Brien and the voluntary workers of the women's labour organisations and suggested, "[The] coming generation of working women will be much better informed politically, and more capable of grasping the details of laws which affect themselves than even were the most cultured women of a past period".¹⁴

The Brisbane Clothing Trade Union (Female Branch) appears to have grown out of the Female Factory Operatives Union and made history as the first women's union to march in an eight-hour day procession.

For some time women had been complaining that man's first insult to woman was in bestowing on her the monopoly of the kitchen and denying her a share in other aspects of society, preventing her from developing as a person and bringing her own form of culture before the public. The second insult, they contended, was the relegation of women to the background of organisations in a purely supporting role. "We are painted as the world's best cadgers. We are supposed to be good at taking round the hat and so we are considered as capable only of being the finance raisers of the male structured organisations, be they hospital committees, welfare groups or political organisations",¹⁵ was the complaint of newly enfranchised women. Labour women considered that the political capabilities of many of their women members would make them effective officials whose new ideas would work to the betterment of political activities and labour organisations. They sought an equal voice in the male-dominated workers political associations and other bodies of the workers. "There's a plum duff of a time ahead for Labour when all working men and women run on the same set of rails", the Worker's women's page said.¹⁶ At the time of the 1907 Labour Convention in Rockhampton the women's page claimed it was about time
women too were present; it was tired of branches "timidly wait­ing for each other to appoint a woman to one of these one sex conventions". It was overjoyed to announce in the next issue that Mrs E. Willis was a delegate from Surat WPO — "at last a flutter of petticoat at one of these conventions".

Emma Miller and Kate Dwyer (NSW) were delegates to the Fourth Political Labour Conference (6-10 July 1908) held in Brisbane. In opening the conference, Andrew Fisher, president, and leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party, said:

I am pleased to see women delegates present. It is not the first inter-State Conference at which they have been represented, for we were honoured with a woman delegate [Lilian Locke] at the conference in Melbourne three years ago, but I am glad to see that they have increased 100 per cent. The presence of women means good to our Movement ... On some social questions men are mere novices compared with women, and women's aid and co-operation therefore is invaluable and all powerful to the Labour party in helping towards the solution of social and industrial reform ... There is another thing I would speak of, and I mention with a slight amount of diffidence. It is that I trust that not another Federal election will take place without there being a woman endorsed as a Labour candidate for the Senate, and I hope that it will not be only in one State. This suggestion might at the commencement be unpopular. But, we as a Party were the first to launch out and enfranchise women, and those who took in hand the great work of adult suffrage should not look unkindly on the nomination of women to Parliament.

At a function held in honour of the delegates, Emma Miller and Kate Dwyer were among those who made short speeches. Kate expressed regret that only two states were represented by women, particularly as the time had come for women to stand beside the men in the struggle for progress. Emma, after saying she was glad to have the opportunity of being present as a delegate, was reported in the Courier as stating that: "Before the Labour movement started her father had belonged to the old Chartist movement. In her time she had seen the Labour Party bring about every one of the old Chartist planks, with the one exception of annual Parliaments. There were splendid women in the movement in Queensland who simply wanted organising."

It was at this conference that the name, the Australian Labour Party was adopted.
A WOMAN DELEGATE.

The Labour movement stands for the improvement of each unit, so as to become a glorious whole. Its aims and ideas will secure an educated and enlightened democracy, which by its scope, progress, and prosperity will be the great means of undermining the conservative, reactionary governments in the Old World.

[Signature]

OUR GRAND OLD LADY.

The reason why I believe in the Labour party is because it is the only party that stands for Justice and Humanity against the privileges and power of the capitalist class. That is why I would urge every toiler, man and woman, to vote solid Labour for both Federal and State Parliaments.

[Signature]

Conference statements, Worker, 11 July 1908

In speaking to a resolution, Emma Miller said that she favoured state members of parliament being eligible to stand for Federal Parliament which she regarded as the greater institution and the one that should have the widest choice in the matter of candidates. And in seconding the motion congratulating W.G. Spence, founder of the Shearers’ Union, on his thirtieth anniversary of trade union activity, she paid warm tribute to his zeal on behalf of the workers. Several years later her friend “Marietta” said that all Emma Miller’s energies had been concentrated in the one direction — to helping to raise the status of working people. Emma would explain the position of the labour movement: “Those who don’t understand the labour movement say that we want all people to be on the same level — but we don’t want anything of the sort — what we desire is that all should have equal opportunities.
Many will achieve distinction and others won’t raise much at all for the world is made up of all types.” Emma would talk for hours in this way about the labour movement that was so much part of her.

In spite of individual recognition of women’s ability to take their place capably in workers organisations, most women workers were still denied a place in the eight-hour-day marches, the rallying point for trade unionists since 1865. After the Trade Union Act of 1886 legalised unions, trade union records show that an eight-hour-day women’s committee was formed, but say nothing of its activities or period of operation. In 1899 women cyclists competed in the Labour Day sports and a 1903 report refers to the Woman’s Equal Franchise Association’s refreshment stall at the Exhibition Grounds after the march, but women were excluded from celebrating the day by marching. The discontent of the *Worker*’s women’s page is obvious in its reference to the 1903 procession: “The eight hour procession of workers marching to the music of liberty they have wrested from the rulers, and its banner waving is always the bright spot of the industrial year . . . Some day it will not be a one-sexed procession. Brisbane women unionists will march in the ranks, each woman carrying a flag.”

Labour women also showed concern about the lack of women’s participation in this and other marches. It was the practice of the St Patrick’s Day march to convey women in taxi cabs, and in their column in the *Worker* in 1904 the women asked, “In what year of grace will women walk in Brisbane processions with men?” They said that such an advertisement of women’s physical inferiority to men made it difficult to maintain their “mental equality”, and that sex equality meant “so much to women”. They claimed the walk from William Street to the Exhibition Grounds was only a constitutional, adding “A mixed procession when it does walk will be second to none to Lapland”.

After the 1905 eight-hour procession Labour women complained that they might have been participating if the WPOs had appointed some women delegates, but it was not until 1908 that their protests brought success. The newly formed Brisbane Clothing Trade Union (Female Branch) was the trailblazer. (It is interesting that this too was the year that New York garment workers
demonstrated publicly to draw attention to their poor conditions and that the date of this demonstration, March 8, has now become International Womens Day.)

The *Worker* made mention of the fact that the 1908 eight-hour-day procession "was graced by the wage-earning daughters of the People, the female workers bravely marching with their fathers and brothers. They were there to impress on the public conscience that those who bear the most exhausting share in the production of wealth should partake more largely in the benefits of the machinery of our inventive Age." Emma took part in this and later processions and took pleasure in designing and decorating floats with her daughter.

The march was led by the historic eight-hour-day banner with its motto, "United to protect, Not to injure" held aloft by the Eight Hour Day Committee officials. The women's union had pride of place and featured a striking display showing how girls were "sweated in sunny Queensland". On a lorry girls worked at their sewing machines while in the centre a sweater sat in a comfortable chair fanning herself in luxurious ease. The lorry was decorated with such slogans as "Sweated industries and pale faces", "Welcome the Wages Board and a living wage", "Join the union" and "Workers of the world unite". Other placards displayed the sweater rates being paid — "Trousers for making 2½ d.", "Trousers for finishing 1d. per pair", "Blouses making 2½ d." and so on.

The women unionists' participation in the march created much interest, earning a special comment in the *Courier* from woman journalist Vesta:

> Now comes the inference to the thinking woman. If such prices prevail, then there is sweating in Brisbane — sweating worthy of the deepest condemnation! But — and there is a but — sweating will not exist without encouragement. The typical well-fed lady is not running her factory, employing her machinists at that price except for the fact that she has heaps of customers, plenty of demand for the goods. She is not running a charitable institution!

> Now, who are the purchasers of these low-priced goods? ...

> All workers must accept their share of responsibility in this matter. It is pitiable in sunny Queensland that women should work for such prices, but it is more pitiable that others like themselves will buy the product of their sweated lives!
Then there is another thought. There is absolutely no compulsion for women workers to accept either sweated work or sweated wages. The factories are not the only avenue for a healthy growing young Queensland girl. It is almost a heresy to speak of domestic work, and to suggest that a home and from ten to fifteen shillings a week is at her disposal whenever she steps down from her pedestal and accepts it.

There is no mistaking the deduction — the remedy is in the women's control — in the girls' own hands to change their sphere of work, or in the public spirited women to refuse to buy the sweated products.

Women workers, particularly factory employees, were continually condemned because of their low wages and even for working. A *Lone Hand* reporter, Beatrix Tracy, investigating conditions of working women in 1908, expressed concern at the debilitating effects of factory work. She saw women on low rates of pay as attacking the wage rate of her male contemporaries, and merely for the sake of a "decadent illusion of independence". She favoured the abolition of factory work for women and girls and for the payment of a living wage, not as a woman's right, but so that employers would then employ only men. Her summing up — "Woman's role is motherhood . . . she has no more right to be a man's competitor than his slave". Such attitudes had to be continually opposed by Emma Miller and other Labour women.

When Justice Higgins brought down the Harvester Judgment in 1907 he created a discrimination against women that was to bar the improvement of women's pay rates for many decades. He based the male wage on the concept of a "family wage" enough to support a man, wife and three children in "frugal comfort" — a basic wage. Women's wages were fixed at 54 per cent of the male minimum wage, just enough to keep themselves respectable before catching a husband.

As the basic wage of seven shillings per day set by the Harvester Judgment meant an increase in many workers' current wages, it was hailed by the labour movement. Unionists accepted that one section of the workforce should receive less than the minimum wage, in line with their inability to accept that women also were workers, and in many cases the "family breadwinner". And girl workers accepted the lower pay rate, dreaming of eventual rescue through marriage.

Although there were arguments for equal pay on both economical and humanitarian grounds, there is no evidence of any or-
ganised women’s protest. This doesn’t necessarily mean that in Queensland there was none. Labour election propaganda had stressed the principle of “equal pay for equal work”, saying “The Labour Party declines to brand women as an inferior race, and insists upon them getting the same pay as men for the same work”. Yet the party appears to have been silent now about women receiving only 54 per cent. Still widespread was the view that if men’s wages were raised high enough women would no longer need to go to work. When Judge Higgins stated in a Broken Hill case, “Human labour should be properly paid before dividends are considered”, Labour women considered he gave the “minimum of law with the maximum of humanity”, and said they would always have a warm corner in their hearts for him.

The wages boards were formed in 1908 and in determining women’s wages continued to assume that girls would be supported by their families. When the increased wages granted by these boards led to the sacking of staff or increased prices, working women turned, not against the employers but against the unions and the Labour Party, blaming them because they had fought for the establishment of the Wages Boards. Again Emma Miller, Helen Huxham and others had to mount an educational campaign explaining the true position, and continue to call for equal pay. Working women found it difficult to grasp that they should be economically independent on a livable wage, an equal wage that was their right. It is no wonder then that male workers and many unions didn’t support or understand the concept of an equal living wage for women.

Some progress was achieved when the AWU, at its 1909 conference, passed a resolution to the effect that female cooks employed in shearing sheds should be paid the same rates as men. “Slowly, but surely”, commented the women’s page, “the age-long idea of sex-inequality is breaking down”.

The Wages Boards came to be blamed for every price rise or variation; as the Worker commented:

There is no doubt, as Mayor Wilson says, that misrepresentation of Wages Boards won the metropolitan seats for the Fusion liars. He himself met out-of-work tailoresses and milliners in his electorate bitterly blaming the wages boards for their misfortune, although there are no boards in those trades! and he told a story we can well believe. A
friend bought a bottle of patent medicine last month at a Queen Street chemist’s. “One and six”, said the chemist. “One and three in the Valley” protested the friend. “Yes, it’s the Wages Boards”, said the chemist. 

An article in the Worker complained: “There was some difficulty about the appointment of a chairman for our wages boards, but as a way out of it no one thought of appointing a woman. That shows how backward we are.” It suggested that women factory inspectors such as Edith Smith and Mrs Charlton would be very suitable as they displayed a thorough knowledge and understanding of wages and conditions and factory legislation. On the other hand, the Mackay Waterside Workers Union prided itself on having a woman, “Mattie” Hossack, as assistant secretary. She acted as secretary in her father’s absence.

At the time Emma was attending the Labour conference, Annie Besant visited Brisbane as part of an Australian tour. Articles in the Worker expressed a keen interest in the visit of a woman renowned for her efforts on behalf of working-class women, particularly her championship of the London match girls’ strike in 1888. Subsequent articles give the impression that women were greatly disappointed because Annie Besant, as a Theosophist, was preaching that creed and her audience of working women felt let down and not sure what she was now advocating.

On 26 June 1909 a tea in honour of Emma Miller’s seventieth birthday was held in the Social Democratic Vanguard room. Given by the vice-president and secretary of the Women’s Labour Council, Mesdames Sampson and Collings, it was attended by many members of the old franchise association. Kitty Collings, daughter of Joe and Kate Collings, presented Emma with a bunch of flowers tied with red and white streamers, and she received from Dave Bowman, on behalf of those gathered, a book entitled The Labour Movement in Australia. Congratulatory letters and telegrams arrived from all over Australia. The Worker made special mention of one from Will Jones, editor of Australia’s only Labour daily, the Barrier Truth (Broken Hill), and commented that “altogether she has discovered that in Socialist circles it is not a bad thing to be seventy”.

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Prior to her birthday the women's page of the Worker quoted an American university professor who had said "Women suffrage is a kind of witchcraft that seizes upon weak women with diseased nerves". After praising American women-suffrage activists who had been politically active in their later years, it added "Our own little suffrage champion, Mrs Emma Miller, is seventy this month, and the life of the University professor who says she is a weak woman with diseased nerves won't be worth much". Another paragraph recalled that Emma "waved a franchise flag right in the enemy's face" and "everyone knows she could run a Labour revolution every three minutes".

A story was told of the time "the class lot at North Brisbane" said they were glad they were not represented by a pie politician, referring to J.G. Smith, recently elected to the Queensland State Parliament. Hearing of this, Emma Miller had said, "It is true that he makes pies, and good pies, and if a hungry dead beat came to his stall at midnight and wanted a pie he got one, and the money didn't matter. But mark the difference. If a shearer with his swag up entered a swell cafe he was asked to kindly retire." Elections may come and elections may go, but Emma Miller goes on forever", labour circles said, and when 1910 ushered in another federal election she threw herself into the usual round of speech-making and electioneering. Once again she became president of the Bazaar Committee, formed this time to help finance a special daily newspaper to be published during the course of the election.

The bazaar of 1910 was a special one, with "whirling bustle and gaiety" for two days and nights at the Trades Hall. Emma opened the bazaar in a "vigorous little speech" in which she appealed for "solid, united work in the forthcoming federal campaign". She hoped the bazaar would be a financial success because a "labour election newspaper would prove a power of good against the lies and calumny of the capitalist organs". Always generous with her praise, she said she was prouder than ever of Brisbane Labour women who had given such loyal and devoted service to the work of the bazaar although many had "little ones and limited means". She was presented with a beautiful bouquet tied with "socialist red ribbon".
During the campaign the Worker referred to a surprising misprint in the Brisbane Courier’s “Advice to Women” which had said, “Vote effectively against the Party of anti-socialism”. The Worker reproduced it as Labour’s election advice to women.\(^4^1\) The election resulted in a first federal Labour victory and a Gympie member, Andrew Fisher, became Prime Minister; Queensland Labourites and supporters were overjoyed.\(^4^2\) It was also the first time a political party had won an absolute majority in a national election.

The Female Employees Union celebrated with a victory social, and joined other Labour supporters for the one big event at the Exhibition Hall. This was a wonderful celebration with the heroes of the election “cheered to the echo”. Emma Miller was spokesperson for the women in the audience and, the Worker reported, as “usual she flute the right time and did us credit”.\(^4^3\) She declared the day the happiest of her life, and was presented with a bunch of red cactus dahlias “to give the last touch of perfection to the day”. She was warmly received “and cheered at the conclusion of a characteristic speech”\(^4^4\) (which, however, the Worker neglected to report).

When thousands gathered at Central Station to welcome Andrew Fisher on the way from his home in Gympie to Canberra, Emma was one of the welcoming group on the platform. Other federal parliamentarians had joined the train at Brunswick Street Station. Thousands of people strolled with Fisher and his entourage through Brisbane streets to the Trades Hall and Labour Party headquarters.

For the opening of Parliament, Emma lent Mrs Fisher a beautiful fringed and embroidered shawl that she had brought from England, and which she treasured greatly.

Not long after coming to office, the Labour Federal Government passed a resolution in both Houses, urging that other nations enjoying representative government “would be well advised in granting votes to women”. It gave as one of its reasons that women’s votes gave greater prominence to legislation affecting women and children and added, “the reform has brought nothing but good, although disaster was freely prophesised”.\(^4^5\) One of the
Fisher Government’s early reforms was the introduction of the maternity allowance or “baby bonus”.

An indication of trade unionists’ feeling for Emma Miller can be gained from an incident reported at the time of the 1910 Trades Union Congress. The President was said to have taken advantage of her entrance into the room, to thank her on behalf of the Congress for the honour of her visit. Emma spoke briefly in acknowledgment of the greeting.

A story told of Emma Miller at this time related to the “turncoat” Kidston and a friend who in a “handsome motor passed Mrs Miller in a quiet part of Edward Street and the premier leaned out and looked at her. That was more than Mrs Miller could stand especially as our senators were on top of the election board just then. ‘Traitor and Judas’ she cried. ‘I have more right in that car than you have!’” 47

On 7 May 1910 the Worker called for subscriptions from unionists and sympathisers towards a “handsome present” for Emma Miller — an appeal from the Trades and Labour Council who considered her a “fighter Labourites delight in honouring”. 47 The article said that in these days of Labour Government it was as well to remember those who had marched at the head of the column all the time, as Mrs Miller had done “without side stepping into Tory tunnels and retiring into conservative caves”. 48 It also paid tribute to her ungrudging self-sacrifice and lifelong fidelity to humanitarian measures. On 5 July, however, the ALF, on receiving a subscription list from the Trades and Labour Council soliciting donations towards the proposed testimonial, resolved “that no appeal for funds be made through the columns of the Worker except for political or industrial purposes unless by express purpose of the ALF executive”. 49 There are no further reports which would indicate the fate of the planned presentation.

The election was hardly over when Emma Miller, at 72, became honorary organiser of the Clothing Trade Union. After a few months she handed over to a Miss Dunbar. At this time a man was paid twenty-four shillings for making a Norfolk jacket and a woman fourteen shillings. Times were hard and it was reported that many working people were living on credit. It was said that if
Imported Wage Slaves. — As there are a large number of domestic servants to arrive by the "Rippingham Grange," the general public are advised that the period for hiring domestics will extend over the three days following the arrival of that vessel. Ladies requiring domestics may apply at the depot — News Item. (Worker, 30 September 1911)

you paid the grocer, butcher or baker when immediate payment was demanded, the pawnshops would do a brisk trade.

Women were busy organising: Mrs Finney, as organiser of the Shop Assistants' Union, travelled to Toowoomba to establish a branch of that union; Emma Miller set off for Nambour and Eumundi to propagandise for the Labour Party; and Helen Huxham
went to Charleville on behalf of the AWU to resuscitate the Women Workers' Union. She inspired the women and organised a successful demand for decent wages and improved sleeping accommodation for domestics at local hotels. When the hotels used this as an excuse to raise their prices, the Brisbane Courier directed the blame for the increase at Helen Huxham. While in Charleville, local domestic servants suggested to her that a suitable advertisement might be: “Wanted. An unlimited number of mistresses fit to have servants.”

In 1911 Emma Miller had a mixed year, suffering much ill health. She attended the farewell to Henry Boote, editor of the Worker who wrote articles under the nom de plume, Touchstone. He was leaving to become editor of the Sydney publication. Among the women present were Mesdames Collings, Huxham, Sampson, Stevens and Finney. In proposing the toast to the Worker and its staff, J. McNeill, secretary of the Charleville AWU, referred to the paper as the “Bushman’s Bible”. In her speech, Emma said she had “gone through many battles in the Labour movement and found it sad to be saying farewell to such a fighter as Mr Boote”. She hoped to see him as editor of a Labour daily. A week later a news item stated “Emma Miller, Queensland’s grand old labour woman is about to visit Sydney to recuperate her health. She will be absent for about two months.”

She did not remain idle while away. In Sydney she was heartily welcomed by the Labour leagues and entertained at lunch on the government launch by sixty Labour women and fourteen members of parliament. A dinner was also given in her honour. On her return in June she reported enthusiastically on the capable organising methods of the leagues, which corresponded to the local workers political organisations. She reported that they elected women to the central organising committee with the main duties of raising money and controlling it for election purposes, and of distributing the work of canvassing. She felt that Queensland badly needed a similar system. Sydney canvassers were paid, she said, and although she thought local women too should be paid she had been able to boast that Queenslanders did the same work in spite of the “blazing heat of summer, in spite of blinding dust and flaming sunburn — and had never been paid a penny for it”.

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By September she was confined once more to her bed, but had meanwhile presided over yet another bazaar committee and had become involved in the referendum campaign seeking greater powers for the Federal Government to control monopolies. She and Helen Huxham gave “stirring addresses”, but the referendum was defeated.

Emma must have recharged her batteries somehow, because the following year, 1912 she was again using her frail energy and asserting herself as the rebel she was, earning respect and admiration nationwide.
Ten

The wearin’ o’ the badge

'Tis the emblem of fraternity we wear upon our chain
In loyalty we hung it there and there it will remain.

The Wearin’ o’ the badge, 1912

In 1912 there was social unrest throughout the western world, to which women contributed in many countries by asserting their rights in a militant way. In England suffragettes, finding that peaceful and parliamentary means alone were not achieving their right to the vote, had changed tactics and become more militant, smashing shop windows and chaining themselves to railings. In Lawrence, Massachusetts striking women woollen workers clashed daily with police, carrying aloft their banners proclaiming, “We want bread and roses too”.

In Brisbane the mere action of attaching a union badge to a tramwayman’s watch-chain led to the complete shutdown of industry and to one of the most extreme uses of force ever seen in Brisbane’s city streets. This struggle led to a massive upsurge of support on the part of women; it also saw Emma Miller become part of the folklore of Queensland for her fiery and defiant defence of trade unionism.

The Brisbane tramways were run at the time by a private British company whose manager, J.S. Badger, an American, had a deep-seated hatred of unionism. He was nicknamed “Boss Badger” or “Bully Badger”. As far back as 1893 attempts to have the combined Brisbane councils take over the Tramway Company had failed. (Brisbane had separate local councils until the early 1920s when the Brisbane City Council was formed.)

Working women had their battle with the company and also with male tram-travellers. A special working man’s tram ran at peak hours from Paddington at discount fares, so the working women in the district approached the company for a similar...
special tram for working women. Badger compromised by calling the original tram “a working people’s tram”. But when the women attempted to board it, they found that the men, considering it to be their tram, refused to make room.

As in the period before the Shearers’ Strike, fear of the seemingly revolutionary goals of the growing trade unionism was widespread among the establishment. The unions now had a more secure base, and therefore greater industrial strength, than in the 1890s, as well as being in alliance with the Labour Party. Attempts to thwart further growth of the workers movement were imminent.

When in 1904 the tramwaymen had attempted to form a union, Badger dismissed the leaders. He later reinstated them with the proviso that they must agree to abandon all ideas of unionising. Later attempts to form a union also failed and Badger, copying American methods, formed his own union which was no more than a recreation club.

The Tramway Company had been making high profits, almost doubling them in 1911, at the expense of its workers and the travelling public; fares were the highest in Australia, double those of other states, and services inadequate. Drivers had no weather shields to protect them from the elements and the old-fashioned handbrakes made the trams dangerous, with deaths and accidents to pedestrians regularly reported. As real wages declined because of high food prices and a sharp increase in rents, there were urgent economic reasons for forming a union.

While Badger was overseas, a southern organiser secretly obtained the fifty signatures required to register a union branch of the Australian Tramway Employees Association (ATEA). This application, along with similar ones from Adelaide and Melbourne, was lodged with the Federal Arbitration Court. The registration was accepted, but Badger refused to recognise the union and denied its members use of the company’s recreation rooms. The ATEA then put forward a log of claims for increased wages and conditions and the right to wear the union badge. The wearing of the badge became an issue when the company issued an edict denying the men’s right to wear it.

The ALF, which in 1911 had once again become central to the
trade union movement, recognising that the provocative stance of the tramway company would eventually affect all unions and was an "attempt to aim a blow at the whole structure of unionism in Australia", decided to become involved.

An air of expectancy hung over the crowds that gathered in Queen Street near the General Post Office on 18 January 1912 to watch as the tramwaymen put the ban on their union badge to the test. As each man defiantly clipped the forbidden badge to his watch-chain, the sympathetic onlookers cheered; and they booed those who did not challenge the edict. The badge-wearers were relieved of their trams and at the Countess Street depot were given the choice, no badge or no work.

On the badge the union name was under the Australian coat of arms. "What have the kangaroo and emu done to be disgraced?" asked the Truth. Voicing the nationalism of the labour movement, it referred to Badger as a "Yankee bluffer" and an "alien American" who refused to be naturalised.

The dismissed men marched to the Brisbane Trades Hall to hold a meeting in the large dance hall. The Worker reported, "The spacious room was full to overflowing, many ladies being present including that indefatigable labour battler, Mrs Emma Miller". That night 10,000 people attended a mass-protest meeting in Market Square (now King George Square).

When "Boss" Badger refused to negotiate with the ALF, with which the new union was now affiliated, and after the lockout had extended beyond a week, a meeting of delegates from forty-three unions was called for 28 January. Outside the Trades Hall thousands gathered to await the delegates' decisions, and two meetings gathered in Wickham Park where one of the speakers was Helen Huxham. Believing an attack on trade unionism was imminent, and after much discussion, the meeting, on the motion of Ernie Lane, declared for a general strike — the first ever held in Australia. Most of the working population of Brisbane downed tools on 30 January for the basic right to form a trade union.

The general strike was a new concept, necessitating new forms of organisation, and the Combined Strike Committee, with J.A. Moir as secretary and J.H. Coyne, MLA, as president, set about the task. No work was allowed without a permit, but the Exemption
Committee ensured that basic foodstuffs were available by authorising certain bakers, butchers and other trades people to continue production. The committee saw that milk and essentials were delivered to hospitals and other institutions, and coupons were issued to strikers as payment for essential goods. Those who could afford to, however, were asked to pay their own way, and sympathetic farmers were asked for donations of fruit and vegetables. Brisbane became a silent city as shops and businesses, theatres and hotels closed. Temperance organisations watched with interest the effect of this first practical test of prohibition.

Experience had taught trade unions not to expect a sympathetic press so they produced regular strike bulletins edited by Joe Collings. The bulletins, the forerunner of the Daily Standard, kept people informed and advanced the propaganda of the Strike Committee; they also provided a means of rallying people. The first bulletin drew attention to women’s participation in the strike: “Men of Brisbane, take your hats off to every noble woman that wears a little bit of red. You saw them in the procession today. No butterflies of fashion but the mothers of future unionists.” The women referred to were in fact members of the Clothing Trade Union and were marching as such and would no doubt have preferred to be referred to as fellow unionists. The bulletin expressed its delight at the part being played by these women who, it said, had proved themselves equal to men in the great fight for freedom and unionism and made excellent picket-ers, as “persuasion proved superior to force”.

The “little bit of red” was a ribbon being worn by union supporters, including parliamentarians, giving rise to the term “red-ribboners”, which was used constantly by the conservative press during the strike. Even animals sported red ribbons. One smart young girl caused hilarity when she tripped into the square with a fox terrier, a red-ribbon bow tied low on its tail and one around its neck. Red ribbons also circled the collars of horses as they pulled carts and drays around the city.

To keep idle people occupied, daily public rallies and processions, followed by afternoon sporting activities, were organised. Emma Miller spoke almost daily in such places as Centenary Park and Ivory Street in Fortitude Valley, Pineapple Park in Kangaroo
The wearin o' the badge 177

Point and Market Square. One report referred to her as making inflammatory speeches. Helen Huxham also addressed many meetings, including one attended by eight hundred waterside workers. No details of speeches were given. Articles by Marian Rickards and Ellen Hewett, president of the Buranda WPO, appeared regularly in the strike bulletins.

Rarely did a bulletin appear without a poem by some unknown poet. They ranged from the militant

Let every soul salute the morn,
With drum and tramp and gun,
For fifty thousand working men
Are bound now as one...

to the mildly sentimental

Remember the poor love their children,
They give them a smile not a frown.
Live and let live be your motto,
Don't put the working man down.

The marchers sang to the tune of 'The Wearin' o' the Green' their version, 'The Wearin' o' the Badge':

Now tell us, Mister Tramwayman,
what all the row's about —
It means, my boys (the answer
came) a Countess Street count-out.
Because we will not bend the knee
or rat or cringe or cadge,
We're told there is no work for us,
through wearing of that Badge.

Chorus
For the wearing o' the Badge, my
boys,
The wearing o' the Badge,
We'll beat old Badger, yet my boys
And still retain the badge.

Realising that the Government and police force did not plan to protect striking unionists, the Strike Committee formed its own force of vigilance officers to parade the streets, preventing intimidation and pillaging, and keeping order among the more larrikin element. The Police Commissioner, however, saw five hundred vigilance officers in red armbands patrolling the streets as an in-
terference with "legitimate" police work, and employers and the government decided the situation needed drastic action.

The Government recruited 3,000 special constables from among businessmen and the rural community, early volunteers coming from sporting clubs, the public service and the Volunteer Forces. Contingents of mounted men from the landed gentry rode in from the Esk, Beaudesert and Lockyer areas dressed in their broad brimmed hats and spurred boots. The Courier described them as a "bronzed wiry set of fellows in their dust whitened clothes and tired horses".11

Unionists jeered and hurled insults at these men as they rode to their camps in the Domain where they received ten shillings a day, with rations,12 but Conservative women glamorised them. Jessie Ackerman in Australia from a Woman's Point of View wrote her version this way.

Yonder on the horizon could be seen mere specks, "hardly larger than a man's hand", moving nearer and nearer; they increase in size until they take on the forms of horses and riders. They fairly leap and bound into the midst of the stirring scenes. On they come horses foaming at the mouth and flank, the men flushed by the long hot dash through tropical heat, half choked by clouds of dust. They were volunteering for action, and were soon sworn into service and armed against the most deadly foe of law, order and human rights — Unionism gone made under paid agitators. Trades Hall came up against a force never before encountered, and with which it had not reckoned — the public protecting itself . . .13

Mabel Forrest, a well-known poet and writer of stories in Australian and English papers, expressed her admiration in verse.

Down the street, down the street,
Come the specials marching in.
Brown and beardless, tall and straight,
Rowers from the champion eight,
First class bowlers from the team
With their eyes agleam . . .
Quick to help the right to win,
Come the specials riding in.
How the women's glad hearts beat
All along the cheering street.14

But women like Emma Miller, Helen Huxham and Mabel Lane were not cheering. They looked in horror at the "Prickly Pear
Specials" with their crude weapons (referred to as "nulla nullas" by Lloyd Rees) — saplings, sulky-wheel spokes and axe handles, some with nails or bolts attached. Subsequent events caused the Truth to express the hope that it would never see the like of the specials ever again.

Local men also formed vigilance committees to protect wealthy suburbs like Taringa, Clayfield and Hamilton and patrolled the streets day and night in rotating shifts.

Feelings against non-union men who worked ran high. Most people walked rather than catch a tram driven by a scab. Emma Miller's home at Craig Street, Red Hill could only be approached by a tedious ascent from the city, but Emma "traversed the distance to and fro twice daily" during the strike.

Scabs were subjected to much ridicule. One lad boarded a tram and when asked for his fare, handed over a tin of Zambuck ointment, stating that it was good for healing scabs. A story in Truth told of parents pulling their son off the tram he was driving. "It will never be said that I reared a son to be a scab", his mother vehemently declared as she led her sheepish son away. His father volunteered as a picket to make sure his son did not return to work. In Market Square a man sold walking canes adorned with a red "bannerette" with the legend:

BADGERS OIL
(no trade mark)
Good for Scabs
Obtainable at Depots only
None genuine unless bearing YELLOW streaks.
This is a Walking Stick, be a Walker!
Shank's Pony — Best and Cheapest Way to Win.

The daily orderly processions that took place following speeches from the Trades Hall balcony acted as a safety valve and kept up the spirits of the strikers. On the second day of the strike a procession eight abreast and two miles long showed its solidarity by marching from the Trades Hall in Turbot Street to the Valley and back. Led by Labour parliamentarians, it included a women's contingent of six hundred led by Emma Miller. The Worker wrote: "Last — but perhaps entitled to be mentioned first — the spirit imparted to the movement by Mesdames Miller, Huxham, Bowman, Finney and Pegg and numerous other sterling
women workers, has added much more than sentimental weight to the present fight for unionism."

When the Strike Committee applied for the usual permit for a march on 2 February, Police Commissioner Cahill refused to grant it. Angered that the streets of Brisbane had been denied to its citizens, thousands of workers turned out to demonstrate. Others turned up out of curiosity to see what would develop. By 10 a.m. fifteen thousand people had collected in Market Square. Most arriving on foot as the company had suspended the running of trams when the general strike was declared. The main topic of discussion was the refusal of the permit at a time when it was acknowledged that the processions kept the city orderly and the strikers disciplined.

What followed remained fixed in workers' minds as "Black Friday", an infamous day in the city's history when the "armed forces of the State" were turned against "law abiding and peaceful citizens of Brisbane". There was tension in the air and feeling was high against the specials, who "showed eagerness for a scrap", but the leaders of the strike urged restraint. Dave Bowman, leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party, gave an inspiring address to the thousands packed in front of the Trades Hall, then a procession of women, including members of the Clothing Trade Union, lined up to march to Parliament House to interview Premier Denham. The day was hot and humid and the women were dressed in the unsuitable clothes of the day, with ankle-length skirts and long sleeves. They also wore the large hats anchored with long hatpins, made fashionable by the Franz Lehar opera, The Merry Widow.

Emma Miller, Labour's "fearless grand old woman", had received local newspaper coverage when she publicly invited the women of Brisbane to follow her in a procession to Parliament House on 2 February. Now she said she was prepared to march despite her seventy-three years and despite the combined forces of police and specials being brought out to prevent Premier Denham from being "bearded in his den". Amid the cheering of onlookers she led the procession of women from Turbot Street, only to find the way blocked by a solid body of armed foot and mounted police with sabres, spread in double file across Albert Street. The
cold steel of bayonets flashed from the rifles of the foot police — bayonets that, according to one report, had made many a "brave man quail".  

The Courier reported, "Inspector Geraghty took the old woman leading the column by the arm and quietly asked her to proceed by a different route". As for the Daily Mail, after saying that it "seemed as if the female force intended to throw itself on the fixed bayonets", it continued: "After some trouble Inspector Geraghty persuaded the leader to divert the procession into Turbot Street".

The procession then took the suggested route along George Street to Parliament House. The Telegraph reported that one hundred women (the Daily Mail said three hundred) were followed by "hundreds of men amidst great excitement". Police were apparently glad to let a couple of thousand go in this way. At Parliament House, the women were informed that Premier Denham was not there and an angry debate ensued between the Clerk of Parliament and Emma Miller who finally rolled up her sleeve and shook her fist at him. She and Helen Huxham addressed the crowd that was packed tightly in the confined space between the Belle Vue Hotel and the university. The police warned them to stop and began to disperse the crowd.

While the women were heading along George Street, the melee in the city was becoming ugly. In Market Square police attacked the crowd with batons when it surged forward in anger at the brutality of some of the specials. In retaliation, sections of the crowd stoned the police. Police horses forced people against the hoarding surrounding the Town Hall site, while others mounted footpaths riding down men, women and children. The Truth reported that Police Commissioner Cahill rode hither and thither issuing orders and shouting, "Give it to them, lads! Into them." The Daily Mail report said:

The crowd was charged by a large body of police armed with batons, which were used freely, and then an exciting struggle took place. The batons had their effect, and by degrees the mob were forced to retreat into the various streets, principally towards George Street. In the meantime trouble was spreading, and for a full half hour there were repeated and continued skirmishes at various points in the vicinity. The commands of the police the cries of anger and anguish from the
belaboured opponents and the yells of derision and hostility from the mob as a whole mingled in tremendous uproar, and altogether the scene was unprecedented in the history of Brisbane.**27**

The strike leaders rushed to the scene in Turbot Street and Harry Coyne addressed the crowd, persuading it to return to the Trades Hall. At one stage he rushed between armed police and unarmed civilians to exhort the excited people to act peacefully and led them away from the “hungry bayonets”. The bayonets and rifles, however, were not used.

Meanwhile the women’s procession had returned to Queen Street, only to find their way barred by a large contingent of police. “The women showed a bold front and defied the police, and walked through their ranks. The crowd was hilarious with derisive laughter, and gave hoots and cheers.” The police drove the women back with a violent baton charge. The procession advanced again, some marchers being driven onto Victoria Bridge and many down the Quay. Another large mob “advanced in Queen St, and soon the main thoroughfare was thronged with a formation of ladies”.**28** The procession was now attacked by mounted police.

It is pointless to turn the other cheek when the full force of a policeman’s baton descends, and the women, bruised and outraged at this unwarranted attack, brandished their umbrellas and drew their hatpins. As the mounted force rode roughshod over people, Emma thrust her hatpin into Police Commissioner Cahill’s horse. Startled, the horse reared and Major Cahill was thrown and injured. The Courier report spoke of the collision of his horse with veranda supports of Lennons Hotel; Cahill, in his report, after referring to the use of umbrellas and hatpins by the women “to molest police horses”, commented also that his horse collided with veranda supports and “I was thrown to the street and received a shaking and painful bruising”.**29** Not long after the incident it became obvious that the police commissioner now walked with a definite limp. It was rumoured to have been caused by Emma’s hatpin entering his leg, creating an infection. This was later verified by friends of Cahill.

While others were marvelling at Emma Miller’s spirit, her son George, seeing his frail, elderly mother endangered in the midst of baton-hitting police, dashed in to rescue her and drag her to
safety. She may have been seventy-three and horrified at the police brutality, but she was a rebel and in the middle of a battle for all she had believed in since her father's Chartist days she had no intention of letting a police baton, or her son's misguided concern, stop her. She ignored him.

All the women who marched with Emma showed great courage, though history doesn't record where else their hatpins struck. Commented the correspondent of the *Toowoomba Chronicle*: "The amazons associated with the strike societies are stated to have defied police. This may appear heroic but it was really presuming on the chivalry of the constables."

Blood flowed freely in the streets of Brisbane on Black Friday (or Baton Friday, as it was first called) and most of it was from lacerations caused by the batons of specials and constables. Police also had their list of casualties. People were crushed in the crowd, many being treated on the spot by ambulances or rushed to hospital. At least one man was knocked unconscious. Elizabeth Bailey received a broken arm when ridden down by a mounted policeman. According to the strike bulletins and *Truth*, the true extent of the casualties was hushed up. *Truth* claimed that two elderly people were fatally injured by police batons — a man of seventy-three, of whom they gave no details, and a woman who was struck down by a constable's baton while sheltering under a shop veranda. The *Worker* commented, "the marvel is that many citizens were not killed".

Said bulletin No.72: "A dent in the skull, a half paralysed arm, absence of teeth, an injured eye will all serve as life long remembrances [of Black Friday]." The riding-down of peaceful citizens on the footpath was widely condemned, causing *Truth* to comment that similar behaviour by London mounted police would have earned an order back to barracks and a possible dismissal.

Strike bulletins carried many stories of women's devastating experiences, and not all were involved in the strike.

Among those arrested was a Norah Smith, charged with creating a disturbance and using foul language. She told the court she had been standing in George Street with two women friends when they saw two policemen arresting a man and hitting him with a baton. When she accused the police of cowardice, they
The Aggressive Hatpin.

Next in point of present interest to the hobble or harem skirt as articles of female attire is the "cartwheel" or "bee hive" hat and the hatpins which keep this huge headgear in place are on an equally formidable scale.

"It was as long as a spear," said a man who proceeded against a lady in Vienna, and got damages for a serious injury to his nose done by a projecting hatpin.

From Kilmarnock or Kirkaldy—or was it Falkirk?—lately came the news of an assault upon a faithless swain by a young lady who stabbed him and left him with three inches of broken cold steel in his back and the ordeal of a serious surgical operation.

And—more noteworthy still—within the last few days no less a man than the Hon. Wm. Hughes, the Acting Prime Minister, received a gash under his left eye from the same form of aggressive weapon while pushing his way through a crowd in Melbourne streets.

No party significance, however, is attached to the last-mentioned occurrence, and the lady who now it appears, associated with the Victorian Women's League or any political combine whatsoever.

—Doubtless this hat-stiletto will disappear only with the change of fashion in hats, and the sooner the better, as it is now second only to the per-rifle as an instrument of mischief.

The aggressive hatpin, *Worker*, 6 May 1911

rushed over and arrested her. "I only called them cowardly brutes", she indignantly explained. She was convicted and fined two pounds or a month in jail for creating a disturbance, and three pounds or two months for bad language.33

Emma Miller (as Mother Miller) became a legendary figure. The episode of the hatpin was one of the lighter moments of a nasty day and became part of Brisbane's folklore. It was Cahill's ban on processions that had precipitated the ugly scenes and the thought of his losing his dignity because of a woman's hatpin, had its appeal. Emma became known nationally as the "grand old woman
of Queensland Labour”. Sometimes the term “grand old lady” was used. People were inspired by her, and were full of admiration for her courage and determination.

On 19 February, she told a strike meeting at the corner of Waterworks Road and Enoggera Terrace, Red Hill, that she had noticed in the *Sydney Bulletin* a paragraph stating that she had been arrested. Although she had once proclaimed that she wanted to get into jail to see how the prisoners were treated, she did not appreciate this incorrect report and said that she intended to make that newspaper apologise. The offending paragraph said:

At the time of writing the strike doesn’t look too healthy. A lot of men have gone back to work and the strike leaders have been squabbling amongst themselves. Old Mrs Miller the nimble leader of the militant women was about the same time escorted to chokey, and a small pile of money had to be shovelled up before she was again at liberty to wave the brolly of contention in the heated atmosphere.

The apology demanded duly appeared on 7 March 1912.

Referring to our paragraph in Queensland Gossip of 15 ult. it now appears that the report about the arrest of Mrs Miller during the early and strenuous days of the Brisbane strike was wholly incorrect. The news went all round the town but like much of the other news then in circulation it was wholly inaccurate. The police were making arrests then in a rather promiscuous fashion and almost anyone who was suspected of any connection with the strike movement was liable to be run in. This fact probably led to the circulation of the false report as Mrs Miller is well known to union circles. We regret very much the mistake made by our correspondent and at once apologise to Mrs Miller, therefore.

Other rumours spread like wildfire during the strike: the water supply was to be discontinued; the wharfies armed with hooks and weapons were going to march into the city, which would soon be flowing with blood. Approached by the *Daily Mail* concerning this report, the police laughed it off, saying they had received continual reports about it, but they assured the journalist that it was not likely to happen.

After the events of Black Friday, someone felt moved to parody Mabel Forrest, and signed the effort “A. Plain”. 
On-the-spot sketch of an attack on women and children at a baker's shop in Leichhardt Street. *(Truth, 18 February 1912)*

Down the street, down the street,
Come the cockies slouching in,
Tired and cheerless, out of date,
Hoodwinked by a golden bait,
First class boozers in the team
In their bleary eyes no gleam,
Looking what they were poor fools,
Being used as fatman's tools.

Shoot the people in the street,
Where they gather, where they meet,
Cahill's orders to obey,
Like they did on Black Friday.
Women, children — the aged too,
Just like Cossacks ride right through.
Never mind what people say,
The traitors gold will be your pay,
And when 'tis o'er what is the gain —
Contempt, derision, “SCAB” for name.36

When in late February William Craker, a young member of the Carters Union was killed in a collision involving his sulky and a tram, the striking workers of Brisbane gave him a funeral those involved would never forget. Emma Miller joined the five thousand unionists who walked from Craker’s home, Green Terrace, Swan Hill (now Windsor) to Toowong cemetery. A strike bulletin described the scene: “The silent, tramping men and women four abreast, each wearing red ribbon of the strike, draped over with black crepe, spoke more eloquently of the spirit of brotherhood which is just now stirring the hearts of Brisbane men and women to their very depths than any sermon ever spoken”.37

The hundreds of onlookers along the route were moved to silent tears by the “grim faces and solemn mien of the determined marching unionists”. At the cemetery the crowd formed an avenue on both sides of the pathway. The bulletin claimed it to be the largest funeral yet seen in the city and a magnificent tribute to William Craker, unionist.38

A deputation to the Premier to allow future processions, told him that the processions had previously been quiet and controlled and a means of keeping strikers together rather than letting them roam the streets as on 2 February. They complained that the presence of police constituted provocation and thus was a danger. But Premier Denham, seeing the strike committee as a hostile, opposing force, was adamant that there were “not going to be two governments” and refused further processions. He was angered that his previous approach to the Federal Government for military intervention had been refused by Andrew Fisher, the Labour Prime Minister and former Gympie goldminer. Instead, Fisher had sent a donation to the Combined Strike Committee, whose request for military support he had also refused.

So the strike went on; more of the eagerly read bulletins were produced, and daily rallies continued. A Cycling Corps formed
early in the strike included women. During the Federal Arbitration Court hearing, one of the scabs complained that the worst thing he had had to face was a tongue-lashing from women supporting the strike. On one occasion, the tram he was driving had been chased by women on pushbikes to the terminus where they gave him a “verbal what for” and there was nothing he could do about it.39

The wearing of the badge became an issue for other workers also. It was announced in the bulletins that Mrs T. Finney, organiser of the Shop Assistants Union, had union badges for distribution to shop assistants so that Brisbane women shoppers “could make sure they were being served by a unionist”. In March, this union complained to the ALF that the T.C. Beirne management had adopted an antagonistic attitude to unionist shop assistants.

Badger continued to refuse to recognise the Tramway Union, but Justice Higgins in the Federal Arbitration Court declared that the original event comprised a lockout, not a strike, and that the tramwaymen had full rights to organise a union and to wear their union badges. They were also granted an award with increased wages, but this was later upset on appeal. The court could not intervene in the restoration of men’s jobs, and the employers refused to guarantee re-employment without certain restrictive conditions. Divisions began to grow among the workers and after five weeks the general strike had crumbled. Emma Miller addressed the Trades Hall meeting that declared the strike over, along with Messrs Collings, Coyne, Moir and McCabe, the strike leaders. Once again the newspapers failed to report her speech.

It was said in later years that it was Emma’s character and inspiration that had ensured the solidarity of the Strike Committee and that “no women had twined herself around the hearts of the people as she had done”.40

After the strike

The reactions of QWEL and the WCTU to the General Strike and Black Friday were different from those of the people actively involved. QWEL’s opposition was hardly surprising since it had an acknowledged anti-socialist, anti-union platform. But it was
The wearin’ o’ the badge

Irony, in that at the time the right to wear a union badge precipitated the strike QWEL had placed an order for five hundred badges for members of its own organisation.

A special QWEL executive meeting the week after Black Friday decided to call a special general meeting and proposed writing to tramways manager Badger as a “Liberal Women’s League”. The letter conveyed QWEL’s appreciation of his firm stand, “maintained throughout the industrial crisis which Queensland suffered at the hands of combined unionism, assuring him of the loyalty of QWEL in combating the tyrannical attitude of unionism”. They expressed the stance conservatives had maintained since the days of the confrontation of the pastoralists and the bushworkers of the 1890s — and an incidental feminist one — when they added that they hoped the time was not too distant when “all workers of both sexes may have the right of freedom of contract”. They also advocated “due recognition and preference in filling vacancies being at all times shewn to the independent worker — and that employers taking this stand should in future receive special support”. QWEL praised the Special Constabulary and sent letters of thanks to the heads of all companies of bush constables “who had come so promptly to the protection of our City, homes and industries”. They suggested that the specials be formed into a permanent force throughout Queensland “that we may be ready at any time to protect our State from mob rule should we be again denied military protection”. Similar letters were written to the Employers’ Federation, Premier Denham, Home Secretary Appel and Commissioner Cahill.

QWEL leaflets during the 1912 election made much use of the economic plight of families during the general strike saying, for example, “Women’s difficulties were many during the trying situation; on them the pinch of satisfying hunger fell heavily” and “Many of your sisters and their families were suffering because they were the innocent victims of a ‘Strike’ which they would have prevented if they were consulted”. Women workers and wives of unionists questioned the sincerity of these leaflets, and asked what action such organisations of anti-unionists had taken over the years to solve the hunger of families living on starvation wages.
Typical of the WCTU reaction was Mrs Williams’ presidential address to its 1912 Convention. She described the general strike as an unfair weapon, claiming, “[It is] unthinkable and unjustified in these days of shortened hours, arbitration courts and wages boards”. She expressed concern at the paralysing of trade, people’s inability to obtain the necessities of life and children’s suffering, pain and hunger. While she had sympathy for those willing to endure personal suffering in order to redress wrongs and for those who united together to secure that end lawfully, the liberty they claimed must be granted equally to individuals. At the same time, however, she was aware that there was social unrest throughout the world and that changes must come: “Listen to the conversations of working men, read what they write or hear addresses of their representatives — all have the conviction that they are not receiving a fair share in the profits produced in a large measure by their labour”. But whether the socialist theory of nationalisation of industry was to be the solution, she said, was a secret only the future could reveal.

The WCTU watched with keen interest the effects of the temporary unofficial prohibition when hotels closed during the course of the strike. They believed that it proved that prohibition did prohibit, and showed intemperance to be a greater foe of the working man than the grasping monopolist, leading to “more loss to wage earners than strikes, war or pestilence”.

There were many others who, like the WCTU, saw only the immediate effects of the strike and its disruption to their lifestyle.

Those who got their information only from the daily press lacked understanding of the wider issues and thought a general strike a big reaction to a little issue — the right to wear a union badge. Even some leading Labourites and unionists throughout Australia criticised the general strike, some later stating that it had entailed suffering and “proved a futility in achieving Labour’s desires”. Others, though, took a different view, saying that the strike leaders should have been more organised and prepared before opting for such a radical course.

To Emma, as to many others, the birth of the Daily Standard was one of the great achievements of the strike. A workers’ daily
for Queensland had been her dream from the time she arrived in Brisbane. When there were publication problems on its first issue, she declared that she had waited a long time for this daily, and she didn’t mind waiting a little longer. She never missed an issue, and loved it for its value to the movement. The newspaper staff, whom she often visited for a chat, knew her as a warm friend and a candid critic whose “criticism was always welcomed and valued”.48

Although the coffers of the unions had suffered from the strike, the spirit of unity and working-class identity had not. The strike bulletins reflected that special feeling unique to those working closely in a common cause — a new-found collective strength, a sense of togetherness and inspiration.

People had been shocked to see men acting violently towards women on Black Friday, and the women involved were disillusioned and forced to reassess their ideas of the traditional role of the police. In Strike Bulletin No.3 Marian Rickards wrote: “We now realise the purpose for which the police force exists. It exists to intimidate us, to break our unions and strikes and help employers to bind and rivet us to the chains of ignominy which they have been carefully forging.”49 Certainly Black Friday created a bitterness towards police that lasted for many years.

Men formerly employed in the tramways and railways were not reinstated until the election of the Ryan Labour Government in 1915, and others were victimised in other ways. Joe Collings had his name removed from the government list of justices of the peace (JPs), and the Reverend Pollock found himself out of favour. During his twenty-seven years as a minister, he had openly supported the campaigns of working people, sometimes speaking on the same platform as Emma Miller, and during the strike had advertised his special People’s Sunday Afternoon Service in the strike bulletins. Members of his congregation and others took strong objection to his views, and he was forced to resign his position as minister of the Sherwood Presbyterian Church.50 Meanwhile the Government issued certificates to the “specials”, and Police Commissioner Cahill was made a Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George (CMG) in the next honours list.
The trade union movement honoured Emma Miller in the best way it knew; she was given pride of place in the 1912 Labour Day march. First came the usual union officials and parliamentarians, then Emma, “supported by two little girls representing Australia with floral crowns and red streaming ribbons”. They were followed by “the banner of the Women Workers with about 200 mothers and daughters of Labour behind it”.\(^5\) Prior to the march the Seamens’ Union and the United Coal Workers’ Union also paid tribute to Emma, each calling on her to unfurl its new banner. In this she was assisted by Helen Huxham and Mrs Finney. Each woman also spoke briefly.

When Premier Denham sprang an election based on “law and order” the Labour Party rallied with such slogans as “The Bullets of the Police must be met by the Ballots of the people” and the strike bulletins became the official election bulletins. Prime Minister Fisher arrived to support the Labour candidates, and received an enthusiastic welcome from the vast crowds who felt they owed him much for his refusal to send in troops to break the strike. Reported bulletin No. 63: “The veteran Mrs Miller was almost the first to greet her Labour idol, which she did in a very warm manner. Greeting her with equal warmth, Andrew Fisher told the assembled gathering that he was ‘very pleased to see that they still had Mrs Miller to take care of them’.”\(^5\)

After her strike activity Emma, in typical fashion, decided not to rest, but to travel west and campaign for Matt Dwyer. She addressed mass meetings at Pittsworth where the local community in “their hundreds” lustily cheered her at the end of each speech. The election bulletin reported: “Mrs Miller, the ‘Grand Old Woman’ of the Labour movement in Queensland is as enthusiastic and active as the youngest advocate of the Cause, notwithstanding her 73 years. She has been doing splendid service in the campaign.”\(^5\)

The Labour women propagandists appealed to workers to remember Black Friday and to vote for a Labour government which would legislate “for the workers and not for the capitalists and absentee money-grabbers”.\(^5\) They stressed that the people’s campaigns had ensured that many of the planks of the Labour platform were now enshrined in statutes; these included the Early
Now that the pre-election period has arrived, says the "Queensland Railway Times," the Tory ladies will once more "act upon Denham's advice to be nice to working men's wives and daughters and to working girls, 'for the time being'". (Worker, 30 March 1912)

Closing Act, the Factories and Shops Act and provision for old age pensions. They raised women's issues, such as the cutting of the government subsidy to the Chelmsford Milk Institute that provided fresh milk for children, and drew attention to Home Secretary Appel's reference to women strike activists as "men-women", a description they considered an insult to all Queensland women. During the campaign it was discovered that domestic servants were the most poorly represented group on the electoral roll, with only 30 per cent having the power to exercise the franchise. An election bulletin accused some mistresses of fail-
ing to notify police checking the rolls that they had a live-in serv-

ant. Emma’s son, George, electioneered in the Paddington electorate on behalf of J.A. Fihelly, *Election Bulletin No. 69* reported: “Mr George Calderwood gave an interesting speech and made use of Hansard to prove to the electors the statements made by him. Mr Calderwood ably dealt with the socialism bogey that is being used by conservative Candidate Walsh”. George had a penchant for writing letters to the Labour press and signing himself “Sir George Calderwood”. The strike bulletins went along with the joke and had mentioned in an earlier bulletin that “Sir George” had sent a further five shillings for the strike fund instead of going for drinks, adding “Thus the workers march to total abstinence”.

Although the Liberals were returned at the poll, Labour did well in Brisbane, increasing its representation from two to six. Among those elected were two of the strike’s leaders, Dave Bowman and John Huxham.

One of the first measures of the new parliament was to pass the *Industrial Peace Act* which ruled that strikes and lockouts in public utilities could be held only after the failure of a compulsory conference. Seeing this as a direct attack on the right to strike, Labour members unanimously opposed the measure.

The Tramway Company was now staffed by non-union labour and those who had been prominent in the general strike found themselves subjected to several forms of harrassment. On 10 April 1913, Emma Miller was a member of a deputation to Home Secretary Appel concerning the attitude adopted by tramways manager Badger towards the *Daily Standard*. Deputation members told of newsboys being obstructed when trying to sell the paper to tram passengers, and of passengers carrying bundles of the *Standard* being ordered off the trams; one passenger was told to get off a tram simply for reading the paper. (Couriers delivering daily newspapers usually travelled by tram.) Emma then told of her own experience: because she “as a Labourite was known to some of ‘Badger’s pets’” they had done “all in their power to inconvenience and annoy her”. One evening, for example, as she stood with a small parcel in her hand opposite the Queensland National
Bank, the conductor, noticing her, had given "the motorman the tip, and the car glided past". She told Appel that motormen had many times refused to stop for her. "Only a couple of days back", the paper explained, "they had left her standing on a corner on the Red Hill road". She added, "Badger knows he has the Government behind him, or he would not dare to carry on as he does. When I heard you, sir, in the House denounce the Labor Party in defence of that man, my blood boiled."^59

In reply Appel stated, "I am here to administer the law, and will do so, free from fear or favor, or party bias". He promised to refer the incidents to the Crown Solicitor, and made special mention of Emma's two concrete charges.^60

In the same year, Emma, as a socialist, became involved in the free-speech struggles. She became a prominent figure in the campaign along with its founder Gordon Brown (later Senator), Dave Bowman, G.C. Thompson, the colourful "Artem" Sergeyeff and others. The campaign developed from Police Commissioner Cahill's decree that no permits would be granted for the holding of open-air meetings on Sundays for other than accredited religious bodies. As defiance of the ban could lead to imprisonment, novel ways of circumventing it and attracting crowds were attempted. Speakers chained themselves to veranda posts; others walked up and down while speaking; another, Bob Besant, rode his horse up and down Queen Street with placards containing such messages as "Sorry to say, I can't speak to you to-day, Cahill won't let me". He caused the authorities some consternation because theoretically he was not holding a meeting, but he was fined one pound or seven days in jail because he had attracted a large crowd.^62 Although he was followed along the street by up to three thousand people, the socialists involved found it difficult to estimate how many were out for entertainment and how many to support the cause. The trade unions did not join in these activities.

Emma visited local WPO branches urging members to become involved in this campaign for the restitution of free expression to all, irrespective of creed or political persuasion. She was reported as having given a stirring address at the Nundah WPO.^63

Emma was also present at one large meeting in Market Square
when Dave Bowman said that there should be a place set apart to express conscientious beliefs, as in Melbourne, Sydney and Hobart. He told the crowd that Home Secretary Appel had accused socialists of using obscene language in their speeches; when he explained that this was Appel’s excuse for suggesting that they could hold their meetings away from the city at Victoria Park, Emma shouted out, “Let him go there himself”.  

In 1913 Emma again showed her concern for the quality of life for all workers when she became a member of the Workers’ Educational Association (WEA). It had as its aim the education of working people, not to enable them to rise above their class, but to raise the whole class level. She was an original member of the association which attracted a large female membership in its early stages, when they usually outnumbered men at lectures.

Emma continued to campaign for political candidates, “going on journeys you couldn’t get men to go on”. While electioneering for Joe Collings in the Murilla electorate a poet was inspired to capture people’s feelings for her in verse:

Seventy-six and five stone five!
  It’s time she took a spell;
But no, once more she’s out to strive
  For the cause she loves so well;
Out once more truths home to drive,
  And show up Tory tricks;
Emma Miller, five stone five,
  And aged seventy-six.

Honor her — for the fight she’s fought
  In battles lost and won;
No reward has she ever sought,
  Save the thought of duty done;
And still she’s out to serve, to strive,
  In the bitter fray to mix; —
Emma Miller, five stone five,
  And aged seventy-six.
Eleven

The world is my country

For I dipt into the future,
Far as human eye could see.
Saw the Vision of the world,
And all the wonder that would be . . .
Till the war-drum throb'd no longer,
And the battle-flags were furl'd,
In the Parliament of man,
The Federation of the world.

Alfred Tennyson

On the night news of the outbreak of World War I reached Brisbane, "the whole of Brisbane it would seem, got into their trams and trains and went into the city" to meet friends and discuss the situation. People at first believed that the war would be over in a matter of weeks. Believing Australia's future liberty and happiness depended on Germany's defeat, workers were caught up in the early patriotic fervour and joined up with enthusiasm. It was a chance to test their manhood, join a great adventure and defend the Mother Country. Home meant Britain to many and they were loyal to the Crown. Young boys raised their ages in order to enlist; men left their factories, farms and shearing sheds to share with their mates what they imagined to be the thrills of war. For the unemployed the thought of a regular wage was an irresistible drawcard.

The patriotic fervour spread like wildfire: an effigy of the Kaiser was burnt on the cliffs of Shorncliffe, and women often wearing dresses and ribbons in the colours of their soldier's division, lined the streets to farewell the volunteers. Their feelings were a mixture of pride and foreboding as they waved off sons, fathers, sweethearts and husbands to battlegrounds thousands of miles away. Many women did not want their sons to go to war, while others believed it to be a man's duty to fight for his country. The latter encouraged men to join up and some tried to shame them into it by sending them a white feather, the symbol of cow-
ardice. Throughout the war women contributed to the war effort by knitting endless socks, visiting sick soldiers, staffing army cafes and raising finance for comfort funds.

New organisations arose in response to Australia’s increasing commitment: in Brisbane a Red Cross branch was formed in 1914, and the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) and the Brisbane Spinning Guild in 1916. There were also women’s auxiliaries to soldiers organisations, all dependent on volunteers who rarely received the recognition they deserved.

Racial hatred against all things German became intense and was whipped up by the conservative press. Groups of peaceful people turned into frenzied mobs as Germans, even if Australian born, became the scapegoats for the war. Descendants of Brisbane’s first free settlers — German missionaries who had settled in Nundah in 1838 — were harassed. Once considered ideal settlers, they had now become victims of mass hysteria. Some of Queensland’s and Australia’s finest citizens of German extraction were interned, their homes ransacked and their families abused and ridiculed. Previously friendly people had become enemies. Towns, suburbs and streets with German names suffered name changes. Even the humble German sausage was now sold in Queensland as Windsor sausage.

In this atmosphere, to oppose the war was considered disloyal. But the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the Australian Socialist Party and the Quakers spoke out against the war. The first recorded opposition from a women’s organisation came from the Women’s Political Association of Melbourne. On 7 August 1914 it passed a resolution “expressing profound sorrow that the statesmanship of civilized nations has proved unequal to the task of averting a war that will bring misery and ruin to millions of innocent people”, and decided to cable the president of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance “asking that the women of all nations be urged to support the action of President Wilson, and plead for immediate arbitration”.

At a meeting reported in the Daily Standard under the heading, “LABOR RALLIES MARKET SQUARE. THE LABOR MOTHERS WORD TO WOMEN”, Emma Miller said she was against all war, that she must say so for she was a woman and it was the
women and children who had to bear the worst sufferings of war. She thought that after twenty centuries of civilisation it was "scandalous that disputes could not be settled without butchery". She criticised the "anti-Boche" hysteria, stressing that "it was not the German worker who [had] made this war but the Armaments Trusts and the autocratic Kaiser". She commented that though some people thought the war might do good, she considered "it could never do as much good as would make up for the death of thousands lying on the battlefield". At another meeting she blamed diplomatic intrigue for involving the world's workers in full-scale slaughter of one another in this cruel war. Similar statements were made by Keir Hardie, the renowned British socialist and internationalist, who considered that the workers of the world belonged to a common cause and had nothing to fight each other about. To him the interests of workers of all countries were identical and he demanded "co-operation not war, fraternity, not military rivalry". Emma's friends thought it was time she took a spell, but while this war waged she was determined to use her energy opposing it.

These were lively times and every avenue had to be used to get the message across and avoid the censorship imposed during the war. Emma once spoke from the platform on the verandah of Mrs Curtin's house at the corner of Ann and James Streets, making a "very effective speech". She said that if the Labour Party had been in power in Europe there would have been no war, and that if the women of the world had been consulted there certainly would have been no war. She told the audience that she was only fifteen at the time of the Crimean War, but she could remember quite well a verse of poetry which was very popular at that time. She commended its sentiments to them now:

And if kings must show their might,
Let those who make the quarrel,
Be the only men to fight.

She was loudly cheered.

In the 1915 state election campaign, Emma was a member of the Labor Speakers' Association, whose speakers spoke as teams. Emma and Helen Huxham, with others, were referred to as "lighthouses" in the Labour movement, throwing themselves heart
and soul into the work. While opening a jumble sale — the first fund-raising activity of the Distress Fund formed by the Industrial Council in 1915 to relieve the hardship of the unemployed — Emma referred to the fact that the Queensland Government refused to believe that there were many unemployed in Brisbane. She only wished, she said, that politicians would visit the Trades Hall any Tuesday or Thursday afternoon when the committee dispensing the Distress Fund met; in a country like Queensland there should be no women and children going hungry and it was "simply distressing to see the pinched faces of the many women and children who applied for relief". She said that only a Labour government could remedy these things and urged all her listeners not only to stick staunchly to their causes, but also to work earnestly to make converts. In congratulating the organisation on the successful culmination of their efforts, Emma said that she knew what it had cost the women to accomplish the work and referred to the splendid manner in which working people had come forward to assist, but, she added, it was a known fact that it was "the poor that helped the poor". Paying tribute to the many women working around the electorates, Emma said that a "characteristic of Labor people was their indifference as to whether or not they got credit for their work so long as the work itself was done".

The women activists played a significant part in the election, with a majority of twenty-four, of the Ryan Labour Government. During the election the Denham Government had been referred to as a "Dear Living and Low Wages Government", average male wages being less than those in other states. With women's wages half (or less) those of men, women were "doomed to work for a living under the paternal auspices of Liberalism", Labour propaganda said. It was believed that women voters, concerned at the high prices of basic foods such as meat and butter, had a lot to do with the Denham Government's defeat.

It was the first time voting had been compulsory and soon after the election the Ryan Government granted Queensland women the right to stand for parliament, a right they did not exercise for many years. The Government also developed a chain of state-owned butcher shops, instituted the State Government Insurance scheme and enacted the long-awaited Workers' Compensation
Act. After deputations from the free-speech activists, and much to Emma's satisfaction, the Government designated the corner of Ann Street and North Quay as a public forum. The forum was later moved to the Domain where socialists began holding regular Sunday meetings.

The Women's Peace Army

After one year of war, pacifists became more organised. In July 1915 the Women's Political Association in Melbourne formed a Women's Peace Army (WPA). Its slogan was "We War Against War" and its aim "to bind together women of all political and religious faiths, into a united body who believe that by efficient organised effort peace may be permanently established". For its flag it chose the colours of the suffragettes; purple for the royalty of international justice; white for the purity of international life; green for the springing hope of international peace.

Associated with the WPA were three outstanding women, all experienced organisers and campaigners: Cecilia John, who on behalf of the Women's Political Organisation helped train unemployed girls in trades and farm work; Vida Goldstein, secretary and editor of the Woman Voter, who saw capitalism as the main cause of war; and Emmeline Pankhurst's daughter, Adela who had migrated to Australia in mid 1914. Referred to as "women who march in a deathless army", members of the WPA fought energetically for its pacifist and anti-imperialist platform which called for a permanent peace, abolition of conscription and every form of militarism, reduction of armaments, and the education of children on the principles of peace and internationalism. The WPA believed that no war should be declared without a referendum, and called for a permanent international arbitration court, elected on a democratic basis and including women delegates, and for the setting up of adequate machinery (including the enfranchisement of women) for ensuring democratic control of foreign policy. They said "We fight against the system which leads men, kindly and generous in private life, to make fortunes out of blood and tears, by manufacturing munitions, and cornering foodstuffs; against the system which leads soldiers to corrupt our boys by training them in the art of killing and to act against all their highest
instincts. The WPA also published the names of prominent men involved in the international arms ring.

Those wishing to be members of the WPA had to pledge themselves to active service in the cause of peace by signing the following declaration:

I believe that the war is a degradation of motherhood, an economic futility, and a crime against civilisation and humanity. I therefore pledge myself to active service in the cause of peace by working against compulsory military training and every form of militarism. Further, I solemnly pledge myself to face unflinchingly adverse criticism, calumny, and persecution for my faith that LOVE and JUSTICE alone will bring peace to the world. Those who could not pledge themselves to more than passive support were considered associates, not members. The WPA embraced the idea of better understanding between nations by breaking down racial prejudice, demanding women's rights and finding points of contact between the world's women. It was affiliated to the International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace.

When, in November 1915, Cecilia John and Adela Pankhurst visited New South Wales and Queensland to form groups of the Women’s Peace Army and to assist in the formation of the Australian Peace Alliance, Emma Miller was in the welcoming party which greeted them at Central Station. It had been planned that the Labor and Union Band would meet them and head a march, through the city to Victoria Bridge, but a storm prevented the march. Among the groups of prominent union leaders, anti-conscription activists and the organising committee were several friends of the Pankhurst family who pressed through the crowd to welcome Adela, and "a notable and pleasant incident occurred, when one stalwart policeman grasped Miss Pankhurst hand and bade her and her friend a hearty welcome to Brisbane".

The Daily Standard began its report of an interview with Adela by referring to the Pankhurts and the suffragettes' militant activities, and saying that the name Adela Pankhurst suggested to the "cable-poisoned mind in Australia a tattered gamp and incendiary bombs", but that at close quarters this false impression swiftly dissipated; in her every action there was hope and in every word encouragement, with her objective the Federation of the
world. In her interview Adela agreed that the war had to be stopped first, and said it was the aim of the WPA and the Peace Alliance to educate the people gradually up to the point when they would decline to be made material for the war-lords guns. She added, "Once having secured a cessation of war hostilities we would organise movements in every country to delegate the power to the people to order a war. Do you think any race that is civilised would elect to enter a war and perpetuate the barbarities of the present Armagedden?"20 She said that before the war the leaders of public opinion had deplored the expenditure of money, but were not now deploring the appalling cost of the war.

The same paper reported her as having said at another meeting:

For the sake of the boys who had gone and were going to war for the love of country, and who would die for their mother's sake, let the mothers be up and doing. Let the mothers protect their sons, as the sons would protect their mothers. Let them be prepared to do anything to bring this dreadful war to an end. They could do it easily if women would only stand together till the cause of all wars disappeared, and the armies and navies ceased to be built. The cause of peace is a most glorious cause, for which every woman should dare and do and suffer, ever unto death.21

The Woman Voter reported that another meeting organised for the visit of Cecilia John and Adela Pankhurst had attracted 1,400 people who were greeted by a street band. It referred to the presence of "Mrs Miller, veteran suffragist of this State whom you know and who is still going strong at 74 years of age".22

Cecilia John who possessed a rich contralto voice opened these meetings with the peace song, "I Didn't Raise My Son to Be a Soldier". A War Precautions Act, making it an offence to encourage disloyalty to the British Empire or make statements likely to prejudice recruiting, had such sweeping powers that it forbade the singing of this song. Commented Margaret Thorp in the Woman Voter, "Needless to say, the women will continue to sing it, if they feel so inclined".23 At one Brisbane Centennial Hall meeting, the organisers were notified by the army authorities that anyone who sang the song would be arrested. Copies were distributed, however, and the audience stood as one and sang with Cecilia John. The military authorities found it "not politic to arrest a thousand people".24
Reporting to the Woman Voter on their visit, Cecilia John said they had spent a day seeing members of Parliament and editors of newspapers and spoke to the Chief Secretary about the need for women police. "We sold every copy of the WOMAN VOTER in less than five minutes at the meeting, and also a large number of 'Put Up the Sword', of which more must be sent us." 25

At the inaugural meeting of the WPA in Brisbane Adela Pankhurst had explained that the WPA program was practically the same as those of the peace organisations of Europe and America. She had expressed optimism for the early conclusion of the war and the opinion that the time was ripe for women to lay down their terms of peace. Early in the war, a small group of women peace advocates had formed a committee aimed at establishing such a group in Brisbane, but with little success, because "the women who were stalwarts in the labour movement had become swallowed in the various jingo activities". 26 Following the visit of the Victorian officials, however, this small group developed into a thriving branch of the WPA with Clio Jensen as presi-
PLATFORM.

6. To advocate the following platform:

(a) The establishment of an effective and permanent international arbitration court elected on a democratic basis, including women delegates.

(b) The setting up of adequate machinery (including enfranchisement of women) for ensuring democratic control of foreign policy.

(c) The general reduction of armaments and the nationalisation of their manufacture.

(d) The organisation of the trades unions and workers' associations, with a definite view of ending war.

(e) The education of children on the principles of Peace and Arbitration.

(f) The appointment of a Minister for Peace and the appropriating of a considerable sum of public money for the dissemination of peace ideas.

(g) The termination of the present war at the earliest possible moment, and the following principles to govern the terms of peace:
   (i) No Province or Territory in any part of the world shall be transferred from one Government to another without the consent by plebiscite of the population of such province.
   (ii) No treaty, arrangement or undertaking shall be entered upon in the name of Great Britain without the sanction of Parliament. Adequate machinery for ensuring democratic control of foreign policy shall be created.
   (iii) The foreign policy of Great Britain shall not be aimed at creating Alliances for the purpose of maintaining the 'Balance of Power' but shall be directed to the establishment of a concert of Europe and the setting up of an international council, whose deliberations and decisions shall be public.
   (iv) Great Britain shall propose as part of the peace settlement a plan for the drastic reduction of armaments by the consent of all the belligerent Powers, and to facilitate that policy shall attempt to secure the general nationalisation of the manufacture of armaments and the prohibition of the export of armaments by one country to another.
   (v) The universal abolition or Continental conscription of compulsory military training.
   (vi) No war shall be declared without a National Referendum.

Platform of WPA, from membership booklet (Courtesy Clarrie Beckingham)
Women's Aspect of War and the Menace of Militarism. She explained at the WPA's December meeting that the organisation's object was "to prepare for peace by stimulating constructive peace ideals and working against the spirit of militarism in all its forms". The women's first deputation was to the education minister to oppose the jingoistic spirit being instilled in schoolchildren. They also collected cases of clothing to send to England for the Quakers to distribute to distressed families in the slums.

While in Brisbane, Cecilia John and Adela Pankhurst visited Percival Mandeno, an anti-conscription IWW member who was in prison for making a speech "prejudicial to recruiting". He spoke to them of "the fine spirit of the Suffragettes, and said that it was needed in Australia among men... when he thought of such men as Robert Emmett and Keir Hardie he felt that all the fire had died out of our men in Australia". "This", the women said, "is a bitter reflection, and one felt moved to comfort him with the assurance that men, as well as women, would rise to fight against this militarism of Australia". (Mandeno had campaigned in prison for improved conditions and three meals a day, and had been assisted by Emma Miller. A resolution to the Industrial Council suggesting that she be written to, "to express appreciation of her endeavours on behalf of the Mandeno case" was opposed by Mr W. Colbourne, however, because she had not been asked to intervene by the Industrial Council. Mr Wallace insisted, however, that it was only etiquette to recognise her.)

Percy Mandeno refused an offer for release under a one hundred pound bond to be of good behaviour for six months and not to speak in such a manner as to prejudice recruiting. Years later he told how Emma Miller, on one of her regular visits to him, had said, "I admire you for the stand you have taken in serving the full sentence. If you had signed bonds involving the principles which you have had the courage to advocate so as to get a reduction in your sentence I would never speak to you again." She always encouraged her fellow activists to stand by bedrock principles and would chastise even her closest friends for wavering. Although the possessor of a volatile temper, Emma was quick to forget her outbursts and expected others to do the same.
I DIDN'T RAISE MY SON TO BE A SOLDIER

Once when a mother
Was asked would she send
Her darling boy to fight,
She just answered—"No;"
And I think you'll admit she was right.

CHORUS—
I didn't raise my son to be a soldier,
I brought him up to be my pride and joy.
Who dares to put a musket on his shoulder,
To kill some other mother's darling boy?
The nation's ought to arbitrate their quarrels—
It's time to put the sword and gun away;
There'd be no war to-day,
If mothers all would say—
"I didn't raise my son to be a soldier."

SECOND VERSE—
All men are brothers;
Our Country—One World;
Glories of War are a lie;
If they ask us why—
We can tell them that mother's reply.

CHORUS—
I didn't raise my son, etc.

'I Didn't Raise My Son to Be a Soldier' leaflet. (Courtesy Jim Henderson)

During Cecilia John and Adela Pankhurst's visit, Emma Miller organised a down-river trip on the QGS Otter. Held on the Saturday afternoon, it attracted a large attendance, including Home Secretary Huxham and Edgar Free, MLA for South Brisbane, but led to allegations from tory members of the Legislative Assembly that the government steamer had been improperly used "by a crowd who turned out to be disloyal". Concern was expressed at the fact that not only had a disloyal song, 'I Didn't Raise My Son to Be a Soldier', it had been sung on the trip, but copies of it had been sold. James Tolmie said that "some thousands of Queensland mothers had raised 'their songs to be soldiers'",
whether sentiments expressed on the *Otter* would lighten their
burden. He also said that those on board “had provoked the pub­
lic to indignation. Miss Pankhurst had proved herself to be a dis­
loyalist.” Walter Barnes deplored the fact that the money of the
state was spent on entertaining such a person who was also the au­
thor of a book *Put Up the Sword*.

John Huxham said that “when it came to a question of his en­
tertaining social reformers, who deserved it, he would do it de­
spite the questioning of the Opposition of his right to do so”. Other Labour members supported Adela Pankhurst’s right to free
speech and stressed that those accused of disloyalty were the ones
who advocated peace, love and universal brotherhood, which
was also the sentiment expressed in the song, ‘I Didn’t Raise My
Son to Be a Soldier’.

In March 1916, Emma’s close associate Dave Bowman died. She
had shared with him the fire, the enthusiasm and the hope
characteristic of the labour movement from the early days. Her
tribute to him appeared in the *Daily Standard*, along with those
of many other Labour stalwarts. Her words could very well have
referred to herself:

As an old battler in the great cause, I cannot refrain from sending my
tribute to the memory of Davey Bowman, whose motto in life was
“Honesty always”. In these days of scrambling ahead for place and
power a truly honest man is a treasure, and I could not help thinking — as I moved in that great cortège to follow my dear friend to his last
resting place, as I saw the evidence of sorrow and regret at his going
on all the faces of the crowd, Tory and Labor alike, and tears in the
eyes of little children — that, after all, “Honesty is the best policy”. There can be no fear of death when one’s life has been straight and
honorable. Davey never trampled on Humanity in order to raise him­
self — he always fought to raise humanity. He never fought his own
battles, always those of Labor and the People. His life was one long re­
cord of helping “lame dogs over stiles”, and his reward was in the
great love people bore him. “Our Davey” was the title always — never the Hon. David Bowman. On that memorable day — Black Fri­
day — it was not of himself he thought, but always the people — who
would be the sufferers. I know Davey did not die rich; he was too
straight and generous for that. But I know that he died, as he always
wished to die, in harness — in the service of the movement he so
loved and worked for, and I hope that is how my own end shall
come.”

33
At Easter that year Emma was a delegate to the Australian Peace Alliance Conference in Melbourne. In the stormy atmosphere of the Yarra bank, she stood on a soapbox and fearlessly denounced militarism. She later told the conference, “I could die happy and contented if only I knew that the working class of this country will not be submerged in militarism”. The Woman Voter reported that it was a delightful surprise to have as a delegate “Mrs Miller . . . the grand old woman of Queensland”, who was full of energy and enthusiasm. The Women’s Political Association arranged a public meeting at which she spoke on ‘The Women of Queensland and a few days later members of the peace groups arrived at Flinders Street Station to farewell her with flowers.

On her return to Brisbane, the WPA organised a great reception where she was to report on the conference. In opening the meeting Margaret Thorp called her a “rebel against every form of slavery, who was always fighting on the side of freedom”. After being welcomed by Alex Skirving (president of the Brisbane Industrial Council), who spoke of her as “one of the best workers and strongest fighters in any cause she championed,” Emma Miller presented her report. She said that her visit had shown her what militarism meant to the people. She paid high tribute to the great work for democracy of Robert Samuel Ross, editor of the Socialist and declared that he was rendering greater service to the people than was the whole of the Federal Government. She said that women were now “being educated and would make themselves felt in the near future. They had not been consulted in the matter of war making, but were expected to sacrifice their own flesh and blood to the war god. She wanted to see all those in Brisbane who were opposed to war join hands, as had been done in Melbourne. If they stopped the war profits, the war would stop itself”. She described her experiences in Melbourne, including the notorious Australian Natives Association (ANA) conscription meeting at the Town Hall, where defenceless men and women had been brutally assaulted. She considered the socialists in Melbourne were a “fine brave lot of people and that the most courageous women in the Commonwealth were Misses Goldstein, John and Pankhurst”. She only wished there were such women in every state, and parliament, then there would be less chance of
wars, and fewer unjust laws for women and children. She suggested that if the few men who decided the fate of Europe had been displaced by women there would have been no war. She paid high tribute to the splendid spirit of unity and cooperation between the various antimilitarist organisations in Melbourne and pleaded for a similar spirit in the unions and other organisations in Brisbane.

In thanking Emma Miller, Cuthbert Butler said she was not “the grand old lady, but rather the grand young lady, as she seemed always to retain the glory of youthful enthusiasm”. He thought people had made a great mistake in being too trustful of their leaders, but the time was fast approaching when people would carve out their own path to freedom and peace. Joe Collings paid tribute to Emma’s moral strength and said that “the saddest thing was that Mrs Miller was to-day fighting the men whom in the past she had striven to place in the seats of the mighty”. He suggested that greater than loyalty to party was loyalty to principle, and “those Laborites who had proved traitors to the great principles of Democracy should be ‘lined up against the wall’ at election time and be shot, not with bullets, but with ballots”.

The Blood Vote

Late in 1915 Andrew Fisher, who as Prime Minister had pledged Australian aid to Britain to the “last man and the last shilling”, became Australian High Commissioner in London. The Attorney-General, William Morris Hughes, became Prime Minister.

When in January 1916 conscription became law in Britain, the Australian Labour movement was on the alert against its being adopted in Australia. Many unions felt that a form of conscription already existed: in the west, for example, single men were being forced out of one job after another until they were finally forced to enlist. Similar job losses were being experienced in other industries and the Industrial Council asked that it be notified of such instances so that it could take action.

The National Trade Union Congress on Conscription, held in May 1916, declared that conscription in France and Great Britain was not merely an instrument of national defence but was used to
Rent collecting landlord: "Well, Mrs Jones, are you going to do something for our 'Do Without It' Week."

Mrs Jones: Yes, Mr Skinflint! I am going to do without paying you next week's rent. I'll give it to the Patriotic Fund, and that will suit us both, won't it?" DO WITHOUT IT, Worker, 27 July 1916

break down the standards of the industrial workers. The Congress declared its support for voluntary military service and for the conscription of wealth. The unions had moved their stance from the purely economic to the political: if it was right and proper for workers to give their lives then it should be equally right and proper for "fat" employers to be forced to give a proportion of their wealth towards winning the war.

Worker activists had expected better things from the Federal Government which they had placed in power following twenty-
five years of work and self-sacrifice; and they objected strongly to Prime Minister Hughes's use of his high position to go to England and give vent to utterances which did not represent the views of the Australian workers. Defeated over his plan to introduce a Conscription Bill, Hughes compromised in August 1916 by declaring that a referendum on conscription would be held on 28 October. The *Daily Standard* commented: "The Labor movement has been betrayed. You will find the Government has declared for militarism." It forecast that this policy would "split the Federal Labor Party forthwith".40

The policy not only split the Labour Party; it divided the Australian people as never before, separating families, friends and workmates, sometimes bitterly. Many of the rank and file of the Labour Party, fearing conscription would undermine the unions and the labour movement, rejected it. Based on past experience, many workers saw the question as one of freedom versus militarism. Their memories were crowded with times when the military was used against workers — for example, the Shearers' Strike and Eureka. At a Shop Assistants' Union meeting it was remembered that the "crowd who were now behind the Prime Minister were the same crowd who [had] called the police out, and even asked for troops to shoot the industrialists down during the 1912 strike".41

Unionists were on guard, too, against the possibility that women would take over their jobs if men were conscripted. A meeting of the Shop Assistants' Union, thought to be the largest in its history, considered this possibility a "most vital issue". The previous year the union had complained at what they considered an insulting poster directed at one section of workers. It depicted a male shop assistant being asked by a customer, "Could a woman do your work? Why then are you here?"42 The union planned to ask the Government to remove the poster and to protest at such methods of "veiled conscription".

Under the heading, "FEMALE LABOUR QUESTION — TREADING ON DANGEROUS GROUND", the *Daily Standard* on 26 September 1916 referred to the fact that employers in the printing trade, in preparation for an expected scarcity of labour, wished to have the award altered to allow "females over 21" to work on
The union opposed the move. Other unions were concerned that returning conscripts would be unemployed if women took men's jobs at lower pay.

A meeting was organised by the National Council of Women to seek ways in which women could keep industry going if conscription was enforced. Opened by Lady Goold-Adams, the wife of the Governor, the meeting was addressed by its main organiser, Freda Bage, Principal of the University of Queensland Women's College. She explained that the aim was to prepare a fully classified list of women workers who would be available at a moment's notice if the Government needed women's labour to relieve men for war service. After hearing of this planned national register, Margaret Thorp told the gathering that they were taking too much for granted, conscription was not yet law. She stressed that women had a chance to prevent conscription and should throw their energies in that direction. She was then told she was out of order, that it was not a conscription meeting.

Claiming that the registering of women was yet another form of conscription, Helen Huxham reminded the meeting of how hard workers had campaigned to prevent women and children from working in sweatshop conditions and said that they didn't want to go back to those days. She thought that the scheme "would need strict supervision to see that workers' rights were preserved" and drew attention to the belief of the Labour Party that "men and women should have equal pay for equal work", a statement that drew loud applause.

When the Queensland Recruiting Committee sent circulars to employers estimating that 15,000 young men would be called up when conscription became a reality and suggesting they contact the National Council of Women for female labour, the unions saw the move as a conscription plot and a menace to trade unionism. Anti-conscription leaflets the following year dealt more consistently with the issue of having women workers replace men. One stated that Australians, more than any other race, had fought to keep their women out of industry, and if a "Yes" vote were carried women would have to undertake foul, physical work now allotted to males — to the detriment of the race. The belief that British women were being sweated in men's jobs at low pay rates
while employers profited from the war affected the outlook of Australian Labour feminists, who saw moving into male jobs, via a National Register, not as a step in their emancipation, but rather as a form of the conscription they feared. Australian women did eventually replace men but mainly in white-collar jobs — in the public service, banks and insurance offices. (The 1917 WCTU Convention report stated that there was no need for women to take men's jobs in other areas as there were enough unemployed men and returned soldiers to provide paid labour. But everything was ready if needed.)

The Queensland Government, with T.J. Ryan as premier, was the only Australian state government to oppose conscription, and this lent a certain respectability to the local "No" campaign. Ryan, however supported the war and aided voluntary recruitment. The 1916 Easter rebellion in Ireland, had caused resentment against England among Irish-Australians, who formed a significant group of the Australian population, and many joined the movement against conscription. They supported Dr Mannix, Archbishop of Melbourne, who had condemned the war as simply a trade war. He was concerned at the use being made of the churches where the glory of dying for empire was urged from the pulpits. He decided then that he had every right to preach against war and conscription, insisting that they were his personal views, not those of the Catholic Church. He won widespread support and respect from his followers, but condemnation from the conscriptionists. Eventually others also began to see the "war to end all wars" as a trade war fought over markets and raw materials.

To meet the changing situation, the Anti-military and Anti-conscription League, formed in 1915 following the first anniversary of the war, became the Anti-conscription Campaign Committee (ACCC). It called a meeting of women for 20 September 1916 and, anticipating little interest, booked a small room at the Trades Hall. Such a large number of interested women arrived that they filled the banquet hall. When Emma rose to speak she received a rousing reception. According to the *Daily Standard*, she expressed pleasure at the large gathering of women and said that:

the question was of the utmost concern to women. They had always feared the introduction of militarism into Australia. She had seen its effects in the old world. . . . The desire of conscriptionists was to con-
script the workers and burst up the unions. Women labor would be sought to be introduced at low rates. They should organise the women and demand that they get the same wages as men.45

She referred to the compassion she had felt, at the age of fifteen, when she saw returning Crimean soldiers selling bootlaces and matches in the streets after making their sacrifice for Queen and Country.

The following resolution was passed at the meeting:

That this meeting of Brisbane women emphatically declares its antagonism to the imposition of conscription and hereby decides to form a women's auxiliary to the Queensland Anti-conscription Campaign Committee to organise and utilise the efforts of women opposed to conscription, and to assist in securing the defeat of the proposals which are being submitted to a referendum on October 28 next.46

More than thirty names were submitted to form the committee; Emma Miller was elected president, Margaret Thorp, secretary, Mrs Gunderson, assistant secretary, Mrs Sumner, vice-president. The Campaign Committee comprised Mesdames Lane, Finney and Seymour, and Miss Thorp. Emma and Margaret Thorp, with Helen Huxham, appear to have been the main women speakers at this
stage of the campaign. They were later joined by Jenny Scott Griffiths (referred to as JSG) from Sydney, and Kate Sauer, a close Quaker friend of Margaret Thorp's.

A warm friendship developed between Emma Miller, the ageing socialist, and Margaret Thorp, the youthful Quaker, a friendship that extended to Margaret's parents, Dr and Mrs Thorp of Toowoomba. Margaret became a militant activist, a position that later caused her to question the attitude of some churches to the war, particularly as it related to her belief in internationalism as opposed to the churches' nationalism. Her ideas became closer to those of socialism. She continued to show courage in the campaign, and became involved in the "Battle of the School of Arts" at South Brisbane. She had risen to oppose a resolution at a women's conscription meeting, and was not only subjected to insults from the women present, but was actually thrown out the door. The hall turned into a seething mass of struggling women as Labour supporters rushed to her aid. Margaret Thorp returned with a policeman who said she had a perfect right to address a public meeting. Again she rose to oppose the resolution, only to face further assault and ejection. She returned again, however, to continue her pacifist persistence and passive resistance. She had obviously followed Emma's advice to her — "Don't be afraid of hard work and unpopularity". George and Jean Calderwood named their daughter (now Peg Peters) Margaret in her honour.

Speakers from the WPA visited the suburbs, forming branches and addressing women's meetings. Although now well into her seventies and looking as though a breath of wind would blow her away, Emma was in great demand as a speaker and didn't spare herself. She always found energy to make yet another speech, attend yet another meeting or simply encourage and inspire others. Emma travelled to nearby country towns as well as to Brisbane suburbs to voice her opposition to the war and conscription. She also helped sell the Woman Voter whose fearless articles condemning the war led to censorship of large sections by the authorities.

In the last month of the campaign, the WPA decided to abandon business meetings for the month and to throw their energies into the demonstrations, public meetings and leaflet distribution.
They had much against them: there was the jingoistic hysteria, the censorship, the breaking up of meetings and the enormous resources of the conscriptionists in the way of propaganda, press, pulpits and schools. Concern that killing glorified in the schools clothed in terms such as honour, glory and patriotism, led to the formation of a Children’s Peace Army. With the aim of educating children on internationalist lines, its slogan was ‘I’ll give my head, my hand and my heart for international peace’. Its first secretary was Dorothy Lane, daughter of Ernie and Mabel Lane, and Kate Sauer was one of its helpers.

Adela Pankhurst had spent part of 1916 on another extensive tour organising on behalf of the WPA. She visited New Zealand and Queensland towns such as Gympie, Maryborough, Bundaberg, Mount Morgan and Rockhampton. After fourteen weeks touring, she had arrived in Brisbane during August show week, concerned that Brisbane was “en fête” and that the huge crowds did not realise the horrors and suffering on the other side of the world. On her return to Melbourne, she reported that it was difficult to gauge public feeling about peace and conscription in Queensland. She found that most newspapers were “still blood-thirsty and war loving” and that others were so rigidly censored that it was difficult for any true expression to reach the people. But, she added, “the Women’s Peace Army, under the leadership of Mrs Miller, Mrs Lane, Miss Thorp and Miss Jensen is carrying on a magnificent anti-conscription and peace campaign. If the men show the spirit of the women, conscription will never come to Australia... in the workers and the women our hope lies, and [in] Queensland both are stirring”. Adela’s anti-war speeches angered the Women’s Recruiting Committee in Toowoomba which called for her internment. She was actually arrested sometime later in Melbourne, the day after the announcement of her engagement to Tom Walsh, secretary of the Seamen’s Union, and spent a week in prison. Her mother, Emmeline Pankhurst, cabled Prime Minister Hughes denouncing Adela’s anti-war stance and advising Hughes that he could use her name to discredit Adela. (The English suffragettes had ended their militant campaign for the vote and dedicated themselves to the war effort.)

Womens organisations such as QWEL and the Mothers Union
"Why is your face so white, Mother? Why do you choke for breath?"
"Oh, I have dreamt in the night, my son. That I doomed a man to death."
"Why do you hide your hand, Mother? And crouch above it in dread?"
"It beareth a dreadful brand, my son. With the dead man's blood 'tis red."
"I hear his widow cry in the night, I hear his children weep. And always within my sight, O God! The dead man's blood doth leap."
"They put the dagger into my grasp. It seemed but a pencil then. I did not know it was a fiend a gasp. For the priceless blood of men."
"They gave me the ballot paper. The grim death warrant of doom. And I smugly sentenced the man to death in that dreadful little room."
"I put it inside the Box of Blood. Nor thought of the man I'd slain. Till at midnight came like a 'whelming flood. God's word - and the Brand of Cain."
"O little son! O my little son! Pray God for your Mother's soul. That the scarlet stain may be white again in God's great Judgment Roll."

'The Blood Vote', one of the most powerful and popular pieces of anti-conscription propaganda. (L. Jauncey, The Story of Conscription in Australia)
publicly supported both the war and conscription, but the WCTU appears to have had no official stand, possibly seeing it as being too divisive. Instead, it concentrated on temperance matters, including 6 p.m. closing and securing pledges of abstinence from soldiers.

The anti-German feeling that had been rife from early in the war also became part of the conscription propaganda, while fear of the “yellow peril” as expressed in the White Australia policy of the Labour Party, became an integral part of the anti-conscription campaign; speeches and leaflets played on the fear of being undersold in the labour market by coloured aliens. The arrival of about one hundred Maltese migrant labourers intensified the fear that a plot was underfoot to introduce cheap foreign labour. Some pamphlets raised fears that women and children could be left at the mercy of either coloured or enemy races, and one even called on Australians to vote “No” for a pure future Australia peopled with our own race. Some socialists lost sight of their internationalism and their slogan, “Workers of the World Unite”. Emma Miller’s reported speeches, however, give no indication of any deviation from her international stand — it appears the world was still her country.

As the antagonists presented their cases to the people, there developed an unprecedented demand on the talents of the nations’ artists, writers and cartoonists who became involved in the greatest propaganda war the country had seen. To win the hearts and minds of the people every avenue and argument was used, with both sides concentrating on addressing emotional appeals to women, not as citizens but as mothers, wives, sisters and sweethearts. They became the main target of a veritable flood of leaflets, appeals and press advertisements. The “pros” stepped up the propaganda, presenting women’s role as one of sacrifice — proud mothers and wives farewelling men or welcoming home heroes. As their principal argument was the urgent need for men to enlist to help their mates already in the trenches, mothers were urged to send their sons to assist. One recruiting appeal was addressed to “Mothers Who are Holding Sons Back”. Prime Minister Hughes issued a special manifesto to “The Women of Australia” asking,
Conscription

and Woman’s Loyalty.

By ELEANOR M. MOORE.

I AM A WOMAN. I can only be loyal in a woman’s way. I cannot give to the State what is not mine. Giving away other people’s money is not generosity; it is theft. Voting away other people’s liberty is not patriotism; it is persecution. Forcing other people to risk their lives for me is not courage; it is cowardice.

I AM A WOMAN. I was given a vote that I might impress my womanly feeling and point of view on public life. If I use that vote to strengthen men’s faith in violence and revenge as against intelligence and moral force, my influence is worse than wasted.

I AM A WOMAN. I deny the right of any man or State to force me to produce life against my will. On the same principle, I recognize that I have no right to force any man to take life against his will.

I AM A WOMAN. Australia has given me the rights of citizenship. In return I must do my part to save Australia from becoming a prey to the miasma which has brought Europe to ruin. I see that, but for conscription, the present war would have been impossible. I must keep Australia free from that curse while yet there is time.

I AM A WOMAN. I have an obligation to the men at the Front, but I know I cannot relieve them by swelling the number of sufferers. I believe the glory of man is not in his brute strength and violence, but in his powers of intellect and spirit. For the relief of the agonised youth of all nations, our own included, I demand that he use these powers to bring the present war to an end.

I AM A WOMAN. I know that the idea that lasting peace can be gained by war is nonsense. I know that no war, however victorious, has ever produced lasting peace. I know that a just and honourable peace, such as the people of all belligerent nations are thirsting for and ready for, has a far greater chance of being permanent if arranged by negotiation than if brought about in any other way. I know that, however long the fight continues, in the end it MUST be settled by negotiation.

I AM A WOMAN. I know that everywhere and always, when men make war on men, the sufferings of such as myself are indescribably horrible. I know that as long as war continues such suffering cannot be prevented or mitigated. For this reason I will not sanction the war-system by forcing any man to be a soldier.

I AM A WOMAN. For the honour of womanhood, for the glory of Australia, and for the encouragement of men to be true to the highest in them, I mean to record a vote of WANT OF CONFIDENCE IN WAR, and

Vote NO!!!

Conscription and Woman’s Loyalty (L. Jauncey, The Story of Conscription in Australia)

"Will you be the proud mothers of a nation of heroes, or stand dis honoured as the mothers of a race of degenerates?"50

The "Antis" stressed that mothers were being called upon to sacrifice their sons to slaughter the sons of other mothers. They
called on mothers to appreciate the "serious and awful duty" that lay before them and to see that they left the ballot box with "a pure conscience and clean hands". Both sides drew attention to the fact that the eyes of the world were upon Australian women whose right to vote in this referendum made them "the most powerful community of women in the world".

Censorship powers under the War Precautions Act and Defence Act were used to suppress anti-war comment. Leaflets were seized and destroyed, pamphlets banned and newspapers censored. In a speech to a women's anti-conscription meeting, Emma Miller referred to the press censorship and exposed a number of cases which opened the eyes of the audience. Among other things, she stated that Prime Minister Hughes had sent a special censor to Brisbane to watch Brisbane Labour papers.

As the referendum drew closer, attempts to defame anti-conscriptionists became more numerous in the press, as both sides stepped up their activities. Meetings became more rowdy as soldiers routed anti-conscription meetings, and physical attacks were rife; arguments between friends and workmates, and within families became more heated. Anti-conscriptionists did their share of disrupting conscription meetings, often creating their rowdiest opposition to parliamentary Labour conscriptionists. John Adamson, the only Queensland MLA to support conscription, and Matthew Reid suffered particularly at the hands of incensed crowds when touring country towns. Reid, often in the past a fellow campaigner with Emma Miller, was once confronted by her and was taken aback when she asked, "Were you ever a Labour man, Mat?"

Anticipating a "Yes" vote in the referendum, the Federal Government issued a proclamation early in October 1916, calling up single men for military service. The Industrial Council immediately called a 24-hour stoppage and a march through Brisbane city streets to the Domain as a protest against "political betrayal and dictatorship". More than 5,000 people attended the march, and the Daily Standard, enthused, paid tribute to the women's presence: "And the women! Their presence at yesterday's demonstration was an inspiring one indeed. Undeterred by sinister rumours, insidiously circulated, that there would be violence and blood-
shed they unhesitatingly crowded into the ranks of their fellow workers and triumphantly shared the honor of the day.\textsuperscript{54} At a women's rally held the night before at Woolloongabba, Emma Miller had told the large audience that she was seventy-seven years old and doing her bit to avoid the abominable scourge of conscription. She thought the war "would not end while the profitmongers were making millions". She claimed that she had heard it said that because Australia could not repay the enormous amount it owed to Great Britain it would have to repay the debt in flesh and blood. She advised all women to vote "No" on October 28 and "prevent the unborn children from being shackled to this dreadful curse".\textsuperscript{55}

According to an anti-conscriptionist's memoirs, Emma Miller now found that an old adversary was unofficially on her side. Police Commissioner Cahill, of the hatpin episode, had once been an officer in the Royal Irish Constabulary, and had adopted a policy of giving preference to Irish immigrants when selecting recruits for the Queensland Police Force. These he posted to conscription meetings while non-Irish policemen were rostered to ordinary duties. According to these same memoirs one grey-haired widow and her four daughters, all with flaming red hair, would march in mass formation into the hall of all "Vote Yes" meetings: "After blasting every conscriptionist to eternal damnation, they would burst into song. The strains of 'God Bless Ireland' spread through the hall as her supporters joined in. On not one occasion was a hand of violence laid on them. This was partly because of their air of self-confidence and partly because unofficially they were protected by the Irish born police more effectively than royalty could have been."\textsuperscript{56}

Meetings often had such dramatic moments. Sometimes, to, they were very emotional, as when a woman dressed in heavy mourning stood in the gallery of the Centennial Hall during a women's anti-conscription meeting and announced: "I am the widowed mother of an Anzac, dead on the battlefields of France, with a brother wounded on Gallipoli and I am not going to vote 'Yes'".\textsuperscript{57} When he could be heard through the wild cheering, the Reverend J. McDougall rose and said, "Oh, Mother of Anzacs may you feel in your heart until you die, the reception you have got to-
night". The woman broke down and sobbed "a dumb, stricken, silent choking cry".

Mabel Lane in her reminiscences tells of the final anti-conscription march down Queen Street. Employees of one of the big stores were watching: eggs were thrown and some hoots and jeers greeted the marchers. Two of the "young ladies" jubilantly announced that they had thrown the eggs at the Antis and it was great fun. The heads were very pleased and complimentary until a valued customer remonstrated with them, telling the manager that this was a divisive issue and that personally she was opposed to conscription. "Why, she asked, were the heads of departments encouraging egg throwing and such antics in business hours? The manager’s look of surprise was a study and the customer found it difficult not to laugh". He apologised profusely and then sent for the girls and dismissed them, much to the chagrin of the customer who insisted they not be sacked. Instead she asked permission to give them a lecture against conscription and demanded an apology from them before they returned to work.58

Things became more intense and uncontrolled towards the end of the campaign and again women of both sides became physical in their opposition. After a "remarkably cordial" women's conscription meeting at the Albert Hall a few days before the referendum, a free fight developed outside in Market Square. According to the Daily Standard, "The women concerned were heavy weights".59 One got in an uppercut early in the bout and tore the veil from her opponent’s face. This was followed by a counterattack, and the crowd of ladies closed in to form a ring for the contestants who were thoroughly "warmed for the fray". The journalist from the Daily Standard, keeping a respectable distance, got a confused vision of "flying limbs, zig-zag language, stifled screams, applause from the onlookers and whirlwind strokes with what once were umbrellas",60 until the fight was interrupted by the arrival of the police. While one contestant gathered her hat and pinned up her long hair, the other gathered stray portions of umbrellas, and "small boys collected pieces of veil, dress material and skin as souvenirs of the clash". The text of the meeting had been "The devil went round like a roaring lion, seeking whom he
might devour” — speaker Mr Holman “likened the anti-conscriptionists to this devil”.

Referendum day, 28 October 1916, saw Australians going to the polls to decide the most momentous question they had faced. When it was finally announced that the electors had tossed out conscription the Antis were jubilant. Clio Jensen, president of the WPA, received a cable from Jane Addams, president of the Women’s Peace Party in the USA: “Women’s Peace Party Convention congratulates the women of Australia on defeat of conscription”.61 “The women did it”, complained the conscriptionists. There are no figures to prove it, but they certainly played a vital part in the entire campaign. To anti-conscriptionists, the “Glorious 28th” was the day that saw the culmination of the fight for democracy carried out on Australian shores — a day worthy to be commemorated.

With the success of a “No” vote behind them, the Women’s Anti-conscription Committee decided at its November meeting that, having accomplished the aim for which the organisation had been formed, it would become a Women Worker’s Political Organisation with Emma Miller as president, Isabella Skirving as vice-president and Kate Collings as treasurer, and representatives from the metropolitan WPOs. Their aim was “to be ready to cope with any emergency” and they passed, as their first resolution: “That this meeting of the Queensland Women Workers enters its emphatic protest against the recognition by the Labour Party of Australia of W.M. Hughes, in any capacity or position in our movement”.62

But it was not the end: another referendum was to be held in 1917. Once again and more decisively the people tossed out conscription. In later years, Mabel Lane reminisced, “To me all the unfair and disgraceful methods adopted by the unfair and disgraceful methods adopted by the military and jingo supporters. Mrs Miller who was in very bad health said ‘I hope I live to see conscription defeated’ and the good soul died very shortly after so never saw the second campaign.”63
Twelve

Our brave little fighter is gone

Some left us soon to seek to win
The favors of the foe;
But you — you never faltered in
The faith we workers know.¹

As the anti-conscription campaign progressed Emma Miller’s numerous friends had been anxious for her to ease down and to leave the brunt of the work to younger people, but “restful ease held out no charms to her while there were wrongs in the world to be righted”.² Nevertheless, the strain of the campaign and its demands on her ability as a propagandist were beginning to tell.

Early in January 1917, Emma travelled to Toowoomba for several weeks rest in an attempt to regain her health, and on 20 January, at the Toowoomba Botanic Gardens, she gave her last public speech. In it she impressed on the women of Toowoomba and the Darling Downs, the “need to play a part in the Labor movement as it meant as much to them as the men”.³ She was evidently in her usual lively form, giving “many spicy anecdotes” from her long experience. According to the report of the Toowoomba Anti-conscription League: “The political debut of one of our State members she rehearsed with evident relish, and those present will never forget the incident described.”⁴ Her last words to the members of the Toowoomba Anti-conscription League were in the form of a promise to come and assist in its next election campaign, where according to the league’s report, “her presence would surely have won us many votes”.⁵ Only two days later, on 22 January, Emma Miller was dead.

Margaret Thorp’s mother described Emma’s last days in a letter to George Calderwood:

On Saturday afternoon she addressed a social gathering at the Botanic Gardens — where we all had tea together in the kiosk — she spoke so well on the subject of Peace. It was a privilege to listen to her. They
sang ‘For She’s a Jolly Good Fellow’ & ‘Auld Lang Syne’ before departing. Though the weather was damp she did not seem chilled or over-tired . . . She was each time we saw her wonderfully active and bright & so full of interest in all that is going on and we little thought her useful life was so near its close.”

Hearing on Monday that Emma was very ill, Mrs Thorp had gone to see her soon after her husband, Dr Thorp, had attended her. She asked Emma if she would rather go to hospital or come to the Thorps’ home. “She at once said in a feeble voice, ‘Oh, to you and then he can keep his eye on me’”, Mrs Thorp wrote. “I assured her of a loving welcome.” That night Emma Miller breathed her last. “It was all so peaceful and she was conscious up to a comparatively short time before the end”, Mrs Thorp wrote. She ended by paying tribute to Emma Miller’s self-sacrificing character and expressing sympathy for the family “and all who love her”.

News of Emma’s death was flashed throughout Australia. “The mother of the Australian Labor Party”, as she was affectionately styled throughout the Commonwealth, had died and people mourned the loss of an outstanding woman champion. The flag at Brisbane’s Trades Hall at half mast as an expression of the “intense feeling of sorrow and loss by all Labour men and women who realised that a great soul had passed away”. It was a great shock to all her friends who had believed she would go on forever.

At the AWU Convention in Sydney, delegate Ernie Lane said that Mrs Miller had toiled assiduously in the labour movement for more than thirty years, fearlessly expressing her convictions. It was only right that a convention representative of the whole of Australia should mark its appreciation of her work. The motion to this effect was carried in silence, with delegates rising in their places. Unlike her father, Emma Miller had lived to see the People’s Charter become a reality in all but the annual election of parliaments.

The pages of the Daily Standard, the Worker, Ross’s Magazine and Woman Voter contained lengthy tributes to her vision, courage, steadfastness and continued militant devotion to the Labour movement. Her “remarkable vitality handicapped as she was by a frail body” was continually mentioned with undisguised admiration. The Daily Standard remarked, “It is a peculiar coin-
 incidene that prior to leaving for Toowoomba the late Mrs Miller, in saying goodbye to members of the Daily Standard staff, expressed the conviction that she was going to die in the near future. (She died of cancer, so perhaps she had been aware of the seriousness of her present ill-health.) Truth also commented on her premonition of death, saying she had “looked cheerfully towards the end”.

The Daily Standard compared her life with that of Dave Bowman, who had died the previous year, and referred to “the spirit of revolt that surged through her little framework”:

Like the late Dave Bowman, Mrs Miller’s ardor for the Labor movement was deep and abiding. Like him, too, her enthusiasm and devotion for its ideals were inexhaustible and unquenchable. To both the presence of gross injustices in the world, injustices that should have no place in any enlightened community and that it was the object of the Labor movement to overthrow, dwarfed to littleness all other social activities... Emma Miller, though in body we may know her no more, will live on.

The Woman Voter referred to her as the “Mother Jones” of Australia saying that only a few months ago she had been with them in Melbourne. She had spent part of each day for three weeks at their office “her face radiating with joy” as she saw the activity and enthusiasm shown by their members in “working for the cause of humanity”;

Of her it can be truly said she followed the light and with her unerring judgment which characterised her life the light and right were identical. She stood almost alone as a woman who never waited to see if the cause was popular because she could decide instinctively if it were right. Expediency, diplomacy, strategy — these she detested for she knew they spelled present weakness and future failures. To her the straight line was the shortest between two points. We shall only be worthy heirs to her noble life and glorious example to the extent we strive to emulate both and honestly endeavour to carry on the work she has now laid down.

Ross’s Magazine saw Emma Miller as a “perfectly splendid old Secularist” who had recently found peace in that grave “where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest”. It called her “the grand old Labor woman of Queensland” who was known in the movement throughout the Commonwealth:

She lived 78 strenuous years, and during the majority of them was an
agitator on behalf of the people’s rights and liberties ... she was also a staunch Secularist, and over thirty years ago made her influence felt in free-thought activities in Brisbane. Subsequently her work became increasingly political and industrial. A Secularist, Socialist and Pacifist she has left a worthy record. We mourn her loss.\textsuperscript{15}

The People’s Christian Free Church wrote to the \textit{Daily Standard} that, “as a church it could not claim any right to Mrs Miller but as a people’s movement it had every right to express the people’s loss through the death of a champion of the people’s cause”.\textsuperscript{16}

The youngest recruits of the labour movement wrote of their personal memories, gained just at the time when her work was nearly done. “Through the war we remember her as a fragile but fearless figure, sane, when a frenzy of intolerant patriotism had blinded many working women to their own interests. That is the wonder of her — that in spite of her years she moved ever in a forward line of progress moved by a spirit eternally young ... militant and decided in her views, confident in the justice of the cause, giving strength to the fainthearted, trust to the cynical and love to all.”\textsuperscript{17}

\textit{Truth} referred to Emma Miller as a “steadfast apostle of humanity” and a “woman of the people and for the people” and said she had died “full of years and honor”. It explained that “the name of Emma Miller in association with those humanitarian and political interests which provided the objects of her public activities is so well known in Queensland that there is little need to amplify her obituary with biographical details”.\textsuperscript{18} Reference was made to the fact that within a short space of time “death had [recently] deprived her of her two daughters, both married women of middle age. A blow so unexpected was cruelly hard to bear, but it was fortunate for the bereaved and greatly loving mother that her life had always been very busy, because all the children of earth were included in her love and consideration.” The article spoke of Emma’s steadfast character, adding that “her depth of sympathy and understanding assured for her a discipleship from many men and women ordinarily suspicious of political prophets and propagandists”. It said that Emma had known “uncommon struggle and sorrow”.\textsuperscript{19}

Many writers referred to Emma Miller as a true Christian, in
that in dying she had left humanity in some degree better because she had lived. A few obituaries referred to her life apart from the political. *Truth* commented on her dress sense, and her musical, literary and artistic taste, and described her as a great walker, commenting "Only about a fortnight before her death she walked six miles, and finished the jaunt apparently without exhaustion".\(^{20}\)

To "Marietta" we owe this insight into Emma’s fastidiousness, published in "An Appreciation" in the *Worker*. She and Emma had travelled together to Sydney by train in 1916 and "Marietta" recalled Emma’s disgust at a child who threw chocolate papers all over the carriage and her even greater disgust at the child’s mother. "There is no excuse for a child being so careless and slovenly, for an untidy child develops into a slovely type of citizen, who is an annoyance not only to himself, but also to those with whom he comes in contact", Emma had said. "Marietta" added that "tidiness was one of the old lady’s great hobbies, and she gave no quarter at all to the sloven".\(^{21}\)

Although there were suggestions that Emma Miller should be given a state funeral — which would have been the first, and to the present the only, state funeral for a Queensland woman — her only surviving child, George Calderwood, opposed it. The Queensland Government did, however, finance the transfer of her body to Brisbane. Those who saw her funeral could not have failed to be impressed by the spontaneous tributes of respect paid by the people, from Premier T.J. Ryan to the hundreds of workers who travelled by tram to the Toowong cemetery in pouring rain. Members of nearly every union and labour body in Brisbane attended. The Australian Meat Industry Employees’ Union (AMIEU) Conference was adjourned so that delegates could "pay respects to their late departed friend", for her case was a special one: she had been in the van of the movement for more years than some of the delegates had been alive. Delegates recalled that she had on several occasions been elected to represent the union at conferences; their association with her had therefore been "exceedingly close" and it was only fitting to place on record "the irreparable loss sustained by her death".\(^{22}\)

Conspicuous among the many floral tributes at the funeral...
were the numerous brilliant red wreaths from the socialist organisations that were so dear to her heart. Wreaths from local and interstate branches of the Women's Peace Army stood out with their colours of purple, green and white, the Victorian one being inscribed “Our friend and the people’s friend”. Another card said “Our brave little fighter is gone”.

In giving the oration Joe Collings said that Emma Miller had been afraid only to do wrong; for her the penalties of doing right did not exist and ridicule only spurred her on:

She taxed her body to the utmost but never complained. Social ostracism meant nothing to her if her conscience approved . . . Prison walls held no terror for her for to her liberty meant not merely to walk the streets to come and go as she liked but to think her own thoughts, to voice her own opinions and for those priceless privileges the law could not demand a penalty she was not prepared to pay. Mrs Miller’s courage was that of the martyrs of old. The policeman’s baton or the soldier’s rifle could not silence her, she would have stood at the stake gladly or walked to the scaffold unflinchingly for conscience sake. She possessed in superlative degree the real knowledge of life . . .

We men sometimes call women the weaker sex; to have known Mrs
Miller is to make one ashamed of that term. Weak in physical body she was but a giant with the strength in all that was worthwhile.  

Truth wrote that her funeral was attended by hundreds, to whom the memory of her life and work must ever remain an inspiration and that the graveside address expressed Emma Miller's own profession of faith: "The world is my country; to do good is my religion".  

In February, to honour her memory, a memorial meeting, said to have been the most representative Labour gathering ever brought together in Brisbane, was held in the Trades Hall. In opening the meeting, the chairman, Joe Collings, said that it was appropriate that they should assemble where they "had been associated with Emma Miller for so many years and where her photograph hung". Successive speakers reviewed her inspiring life, stirred by the magnitude of what she had accomplished, from the Chartist days, through her union activities, the formation of the Labour Party, and her championship of women's rights, and on to the current anti-conscription struggles.  

Premier Ryan referred to a conversation he had had with Emma Miller shortly before her death in which she had commented on the various influences then being stirred up to damage the Labour movement. Her last words to him were that he "need not fear this stirring up of strife, because the people of Queensland had become too educated to be led astray".  

J.A. Fihelly, Assistant Minister for Justice, referred to the fact that "it was people with a message — as poets were, and Mrs Miller was, who made civilisation". Following speeches from Lewis McDonald, W. Wallace, Gordon Brown (who said he appeared as a member of the "revolutionary faction of the Labour movement"), Isabella Skirving and Kate Collings, a resolution was submitted by Helen Huxham: "That this public meeting, representative of all phases of Labor reform thought in Queensland, hereby places upon record its heartfelt appreciation of the magnificent service rendered by the late Emma Miller, during her lifetime, to the working class movement". This motion was seconded by Margaret Thorp on behalf of the Women's Peace Army and by Charlie Seymour. He drew attention to the fact that one of the most remarkable features of the past half century had
been the womens movement, saying that "Mrs Miller had led the movement, which was the Magna Charter of Queensland women, because before her advent they had no votes, and without their votes they could not have stemmed back conscription".  

On the motion of Alex Robertson it was unanimously agreed to open a fund for a permanent memorial, though it was felt that her greatest memorial was the memory she had left stamped on the hearts of the present generation.

At a subsequent meeting it was agreed that the memorial be a bust of Emma Miller in white marble, symbolic of her pure-hearted life. A committee was formed comprising representatives of the Labour Women’s Vigilance Committee, the Women’s Peace Army, the Central Political Executive of the Labour Party, the Industrial Council and the Metropolitan District Council. Its secretary and driving force was Margaret Thorp whose name, on behalf of the Memorial Committee, appears on a widely distributed letter calling for donations. It read:

EMMA MILLER MEMORIAL

March 26th 1917

Borva Street
South Brisbane

TO THE SECRETARY OF THE . . .

Dear Comrade,

The opportunity is now open for all unionists to show their appreciation of the Mother of the Queensland Labour Movement — the late Mrs Miller.

We ask you to subscribe as liberally as your funds allow, to the memorial which is to perpetuate the memory of the Grand Old Lady of Queensland; and to send your contribution as soon as possible to be acknowledged through the columns of the "Daily Standard", the "Worker" or the local Labour press.

A marble bust will be sculptured as a life size head and shoulders of Mrs Miller to be placed in the Trades Hall. A panel will be inserted in the pedestal, inscribed with her name, length of life and the adopted creed by which she lived:— "The World is my Country and to do good is my religion." This should prove an appreciation and tribute of our "Mother" leader.

The most practical memorial of all, can only be lived out in our lives
Our brave little fighter is gone by carrying on her glorious spirit of rebellion against everything that oppresses and enslaves the Workers.

Signed on behalf of the Memorial Committee
Margaret S. Thorp

Public donations were received by the radical newspapers, both locally and nationally, and others came from Labour organisations. Donations ranged from one or two shillings from individuals to two pounds five shillings from organisations such as the Workers' Political Organisation in Rubyvale. To help raise the 185 pounds required, socials were held, Emma's photo was sold for threepence, and guessing competitions raised small amounts. When forwarding his cheque, Frank McDonnell wrote:

It is well nigh on thirty years since I first met Mrs Miller. She was then deeply interested in factory legislation, and indeed, in all economic and advanced industrial reforms. In those days conditions were not, of course, at all like what they are to-day, thanks to the force and the influence of unionism for present day conditions. I always had the greatest admiration and respect and esteem for Mrs Miller. She was one of the most sincere and truest women I have ever met; broad in her sympathies, sympathetic with every great cause, and prepared to make the greatest sacrifices for the betterment of humanity.

James Lawrence Watts, Queensland's first significant sculptor, was commissioned to do the sculpture. He carried out this commission under the supervision of George Calderwood and Margaret Thorp and using a photograph of Emma.

On 22 October 1922, the bust was unveiled in the social hall of the Trades Hall. The unveiling had been delayed awaiting the completion of the new Trades Hall building. The gathering to do "honour and reverence" to the "grand old woman of the labour movement" was representative of every section of the workers and included many who for long years had worked side by side with Emma Miller. Isabella Skirving presided and the platform was shared by Mesdames Sampson, Cooper, Finney, Huxham and Lane, and Joe Collings. Emma's granddaughter, Peg Peters, was three years old at the time and remembers attending with her parents; her mother had explained the purpose of the ceremony but Peg did not fully understand it.

Following the singing of 'The Red Flag', Isabella Skirving paid
tribute to the energy and enthusiasm of Margaret Thorp, now living in Sydney, whose message she read to those assembled:

It is always a momentous occasion when Labor rallies around the memory of its bravest veterans, striving to express in some concrete form the love and esteem which in this case the Queensland Labor movement cherished for Mrs Miller. Her great outstanding quality was moral courage. She was utterly fearless when principle was at stake, and she had an abiding faith in humanity. She gave herself wholeheartedly to the great movement which she 'mothered'... The war — the great campaign for anti-conscription had told upon her — but she would not for a minute have missed the glory of participating in that great struggle for freedom. "Carry on" would be her message — "don't be afraid of hard work and unpopularity", the world will be what we make it, and a fuller, happier, and more abundant life is possible for all if we are united in our efforts.\(^\text{33}\)

The president of the Central Executive of the ALP, William Demaine, also wrote an "eloquent tribute to the life and character" of Emma Miller, quoting a poem which, to him, depicted her:

\begin{verbatim}
Oh! What a glory doth this world put on
For her who with a fervent heart goes forth
Under the bright and glorious sky and looks
On duties well performed and days well spent
After life's fitful fever may she sleep well.\(^\text{34}\)
\end{verbatim}

Joe Collings, who was visibly affected by the occasion, explained that he had travelled six hundred miles to be present because he felt that he wanted to hear her say, "Joe, I wanted you to come". He said, "It pleases me to think that she knows and approves for she too tramped many hundreds of miles to carry the gospel, oft times to those who needed it, but did not want it". He told the gathering that the previous week he had been privileged to unveil a memorial to the late T.J. Ryan, saying it was one of the most impressive he had ever witnessed.

You all know of his splendid service to the movement, yet I feel that no one will misunderstand me when I say that Emma Miller's life work and character made possible the opportunities for the more spectacular figures in the movement... It has been truly said that "every big business is but the lengthened shadow of one man" and it is just as true that every great movement is but the lengthened shadow of its most noblest spirits. Most certainly Emma Miller was one of these... She
Our brave little fighter is gone


received often enough scant thanks for her work unless in that happiness which comes to us all, and which was always sufficient for her, in the knowledge of worthy work well done.35

Mrs Sampson, Emma Miller's lifelong friend and one of her few remaining coworkers from the days of the Woman's Equal Fran-
In Memoriam: Mrs. Miller.

Strong men we deemed as true as steel,
And strong to face and fight,
Betrayed us at the first appeal
From those whose Right is might.
Some left us soon to seek to win
The favors of the foe;
But you—you never faltered in
The faith we workers know.

Some placed their wares in proud parade—
And manifold they were;
Some on our blindly-trusting played
With ultra-selfish care;
But you—you took the long, straight road
With comrades staunch and true
And, bearing oft the Christ-cross load,
'Twas but that road for you!

Your gifts were great; the Grand Elite
Had patronage to spare
If you had deemed their soft-deceit
As other than a snare;
But not the silked and satined dames,
And not the poodled push.
Concerned you, but the social shames
In the town and in the bush.

You saw a star in the darkness shine
(And at times its light was dim):
It shone not for the People Fine.
But for Maud, and Bill, and Jim.
And by the light of that beacon-glow
Your course was truly set—
And I fain would think the angels know,
And, knowing, won't forget.

R. J. CASSIDY.

‘In Memoriam: Mrs Miller’, Worker, 8 February 1917
Our brave little fighter is gone

chise Association, had the honour of performing the unveiling ceremony. The inscription on the bust was simple:

To the memory of Emma Miller
Born June 26, 1839
Died January 22, 1917
"The world is my country; to do good is my religion"

Carved into the marble are the letters WEFA.

The *Daily Standard* described the final words of the inscription as a "confession of faith of a great lover of the people, of truth and justice" and said that they were "a fitting epitaph to indicate the high ideals, the humanitarianism and splendid life of self-sacrifice which has endeared the memory of the late Mrs Miller to thousands of Laborites in Australia".

In unveiling the bust, Mrs Sampson said that the memorial was but the "shadow which indicated the form that had passed. The lasting and truest memorial could not be carved in stone or placed on canvas. It was in the work Mrs Miller had done and the efforts she had made to advance the working-class movement . . . Her friendship was one to be valued. I treasure it as one of my dearest possessions . . . If her spirit could only speak to us this afternoon I am sure it would say 'Fight on! Fight on!'"
The marble bust of Emma Miller remained on its pedestal in the garden at the entrance to the Trades Hall in Turbot Street for many years, but gradually the memory of Emma Miller began to fade. During World War II, the bust was moved inside to protect it from vandalism; it remained in the library for several years before being placed on a timber base in the foyer of the Trades and Labor Council office. The sculpture was not fixed, and was often knocked from the base, until one day a fall caused a piece to break from one of the feathers on Emma’s hat. In the late 1960s, to protect it further, the Trades and Labor Council secretary, Alex Macdonald, had it removed to a storeroom. There it remained under the watchful care of Trades Hall janitor, Jack Penberthy. In 1985 it was expertly restored by a local stonemason and moved to the present Trades Hall in Peel Street, South Brisbane, where it has a safer home. Here, to present and future generations, the marble bust “will serve as a reminder of the pioneering work done in the past, work that laid the foundation without which the struggle for existence today would be much less easy than it is”.

1
Appendix A:

Women activists

**Leontine Cooper**

President of the Woman’s Suffrage League, Commissioner of the Royal Commission into Shops, Factories and Workshops 1891

Leontine Cooper was born Leontine Buisson in London in 1837. Her father was a merchant. She and her husband, Edward Cooper, whom she married in Highgate, London in 1869, migrated to Australia in 1871. Her death certificate makes no mention of children and very little about her background. At the time of her death she lived at Ellerslie Crescent, South Toowong.

A recognised writer, she wrote reports for *Dawn* and the *Boomerang* which also published her short stories. At one time she edited her own journal, the *Star*, in which she published reports of the suffrage movement and, until it produced its own journal, the early circulars of the WCTU. She considered herself a radical and was on the committee of the School of Arts. The *Worker* said that it was her vote that decided that that paper should circulate in the schools’ reading room.

In 1894, with Mrs Waugh, Leontine Cooper formed the Pioneer Club, a social club where it was said Brisbane’s first game of bridge was played. She died on 12 March 1903 of bronchopneumonia, and suffragists mourned the loss of their ablest writer.

**Helen Huxham**

Labour platform speaker and propagandist

Helen Huxham was born Helen Julia Dougherty in Conneltown (a Brisbane suburb) in 1871. She trained as a nurse at the Brisbane Children’s Hospital and her sympathy with human suffering was an outstanding feature of her character. Every Christmas she collected money on behalf of inmates of Dunwich, the Diamantina Hospital for chronic diseases, and the Blind, Deaf and Dumb Institution.
She, like Emma Miller, walked countless miles in tireless attempts to educate the newly enfranchised women. She played a big part in organising working women into unions — the Female Employees Union in 1907, the Hotel and Restaurant Waitresses Union in 1908, the Charleville Domestic Workers’ Union in 1911 — and took a prominent part in the 1912 strike. Her home at Qualtrough Street, Woolloongabba was in a constant state of invasion as her services were sought by those less fortunate than herself.

Helen Huxham also concerned herself with the plight of people in other parts of the world and in 1911 received a diploma from the Government of Italy in gratitude for her efforts in collecting relief for the victims of an earthquake in Sicily.

Her husband, John Huxham, was a merchant and later a member of parliament. An individual in her own right, Helen Huxham believed in being politically active rather than confining herself to the home. She was John Huxham’s helpmate while enjoying her own independence.

Helen Huxham died on 14 November 1924 of pneumonia, a few months after arriving in London with her husband, the new Agent-General for Queensland. The Worker (20 November 1924) wrote that if she had ‘‘remained in the State, [she] would have been a strong candidate for Parliamentary honors, either in the Federal or State sphere’’.

**Lilian Locke-Burn**

Labour platform speaker; Secretary of the United Council for Women’s Suffrage; Member of the Melbourne Trades Hall Council (the only woman); Organising Secretary of the Political Labour Council of Victoria.

Lilian Sophia Locke was born on 6 June 1869 in Melbourne. In 1905 she was a delegate to the Commonwealth Political Labour Conference, the first woman to be so appointed. She and her husband, George Burn, an AWU organiser, moved to Charters Towers in 1906 where she was recognised as a brilliant organiser and leader. She became secretary of the North Queensland Women’s Organising Committee of the Labour Party and was in demand as a speaker. She worked as an industrial organiser and
believed that women were responsible for humanity and should act to leave the world a better place than they had found it. She was concerned that the carrying out of trivial domestic tasks blinded women to the importance of taking part in political activity. The women's page of the *Worker*, 16 February 1907, said that when George and Lilian married they had both announced that "their home life, however blest, was not going to get in the way of their social activities". Lilian became disillusioned with the Labour Party's lack of vision in refusing to give women members opportunities to raise their status within the organisation, giving them responsibility only for making tea, raising finance and canvassing.

Lilian's sister, author Helena Sumner Locke, died the day after giving birth to her son Sumner Locke Elliot. Lilian raised her nephew then faced a custody fight for his guardianship with her younger sister, Jessie. This fight is featured in Sumner Locke Elliot's novel *Careful He Might Hear You*.

Appendix B:

WEFA Diary extracts

(Thought to be in the handwriting of WEFA’s first secretary, Catherine Hughes)

WEFA Items

1893 December Meeting held in Town Hall of women wishing to form an Ass.

1894 Feb. Public meeting Protestant Hall. Dr Taylor presiding.

March " " Town Hall. Mrs Leontine Cooper presiding.

April Miss Hughes elected secretary.

May 2-5 Invited to attend the meeting of the Central Parliamentary Debating Soc. Miss Fry from Sydney Woman Suffrage League and Alfred Allen MLA, NSW addressed meeting.

June Settled bylaws and got them printed.

June Attended meeting at Taringa and several of our members spoke.

July Letter sent to every MLA.

Aug. Replies received and read at General Meeting.

Aug. Mrs David McConnel resigned and Mrs Fairman appointed treasurer.

Sept. 4 Petition presented to Parliament. 7,781 women and 3,575 men.

Oct. Branch started at W’gabba. Public meeting addressed by Sir Chas Lilley and Mrs Perel. Miss Hughes in the chair.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>Nov.</td>
<td>Miss Hughes visited Bundaberg &amp; lectured there for franchise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nov. 27</td>
<td>First <em>Otter</em> trip. Cleared 11.5.0.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dec.</td>
<td>Those unable to get on <em>Otter</em> last week were passed on this week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Feb.</td>
<td>Mrs Footes lecture <em>Other Side of the Shield</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April</td>
<td>Moonlight trip <em>Natone</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April</td>
<td>Mr Drake addressed General Meeting.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>May</td>
<td>Franchise meeting at Sherwood.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May</td>
<td>Mrs Footes lecture <em>Problems of Poverty; an attempt at some solution</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July</td>
<td>Dramatic entertainment by KPDC [Kangaroo Point Dramatic Committee].</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sept.</td>
<td>Drawing Room Franchise meeting held at the house of Mr A.M. Francis.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sept.</td>
<td>Dramatic performance by KPDC.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dec.</td>
<td>At Home to Mrs East late Ass. Sec. on leaving for Colombo.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dec.</td>
<td>Miss N. Parson apptd.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Jan.</td>
<td>Miss May Hickman’s lecture <em>A Russian Heroine</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feb.</td>
<td>Circular letter sent to every Parliamentary Candidate.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feb.</td>
<td>All Candidates meetings attended and questions agreed upon asked.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March</td>
<td>Replies received from Candidates read at Gen. Meet. Various members worked hard canvassing for accepted Candidates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Month</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>June &amp; July</td>
<td>Trying to plan for Mrs Mary Lee of S.A. to visit us, but unable to finance it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aug.</td>
<td>Gen. Meeting. J.C. Stewart MLA <em>Arguments used by different people for &amp; against Womanhood suffrage.</em> Frank McDonnell MLA <em>Useful work that the WEFA members could do in Factory reform.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nov.</td>
<td>Invitation to attend and send reps. to Bathurst Federal Council.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nov.</td>
<td>Deputation to Tozer and Dalrymple re Female Inspector of Orphanages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nov.</td>
<td>Gen. Meet. addressed by J.G. Drake and Sim MLA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dec.</td>
<td>Deputation to Tozer for Female Inspector of Factories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feb.</td>
<td>Gen. Meet. addressed by Turley MLA.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April</td>
<td>&quot; &quot; Miss Partridge <em>The Liberal Ass.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May</td>
<td>&quot; &quot; <em>Why Women should have the Franchise</em> Mrs Craig.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>June</td>
<td>&quot; &quot; Mrs Dick <em>Women as Journalists.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aug.</td>
<td>Death of tried friend Sir Chas. Lilley.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sept.</td>
<td>Miss Hughes <em>Women past, present &amp; future.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oct.</td>
<td>Walter Bentley <em>Woman's Empire.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1898
Feb. Otter trip. No charge allowed.
March Presentation brooch to Sec.
April Gen. Meet. Mr Greig Woman's Sphere in the Political World.
April Invitation to 3 of our members to go on Exhibition Organ Fund Com.
Aug. Deputation to Premier Byrne re Franchise extension.
Sept. Willard Memorial collection list closed.
Nov. " " Mr A.M. Francis account of visit to England.

1899

Diary items of WEFA courtesy of Mrs Peg Peters. They are now in the possession of the Oxley Library.
Abbreviations

ACCC Anti-conscription Campaign Committee
ALF Australian Labour Federation
AMIEU Australian Meat Industry Employees’ Union
ANA Australian Natives’ Association
ATEA Australian Tramway Employees Association
AWU Australian Workers’ Union
AWU Australian Workers’ Union Records (Canberra: Records Archives of Business and Labour). E161A/M46/33
CMG Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George

Commission’s First Report Royal Commission into Shops, Factories and Workshops, 1981, Commissioners’ First Report

ECA Early Closing Association
IWM In a Woman’s Mind (Worker column)
IWW International Workers of the World
JP Justice of the Peace
MLA Member of the Legislative Assembly
MLC Member of the Legislative Council
MP Member of Parliament
NLU National Liberal Union
PLP Parliamentary Labour Party
QPD Queensland Parliamentary Debates
QUT Queensland University of Technology
QWEL Queensland Women’s Electoral League

Royal Commission, 1891 Royal Commission into Shops, Factories and Workshops, 1891, Journals of the Legislative Council, 1891

TLC Trades and Labour Council
VAD Voluntary Aid Detachment
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WCTU</td>
<td>Woman's Christian Temperance Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>WEFA</td>
<td>Woman's Equal Franchise Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WFL</td>
<td>Woman's Franchise League</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPA</td>
<td>Women's Peace Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPO</td>
<td>Workers' Political Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWPO</td>
<td>Women Workers' Political Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSL</td>
<td>Woman's Suffrage League</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YWCA</td>
<td>Young Women's Christian Association</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes and references

1 Justice to all, privilege to none

1. The English Rebels, Record, (Nottingham: Artworks 88).
7. Children’s Employment Commission, 1842, Report, p. 254. (Testimony of John Wright of Brampton in reference to Mr J. Barnes’s pit.)
8. Derbyshire Courier, 14 September 1839.
10. Elder Yard Unitarian Chapel Register, 1705-, p. 54.
15. Derbyshire Chronicle and Chesterfield Advertiser, 27 April 1839.
17. Derbyshire Chronicle and Chesterfield Advertiser, 27 April 1839.
19. Northern Star (Sheffield), 2 February 1839.
22. Derbyshire Courier, 27 August 1842.
23. Derbsyhire Courier, 15 April 1848.
27. Derbsyhire Courier, 12 August 1848.
28. The Labour Club and Miners Union are at present in Saltsgate alongside middle-class residences.
32. Derbsyhire Courier, 12 August 1848.
33. The name Peterloo was a combination of the name of the meeting place, St Peters Field, and the Battle of Waterloo. The Free Trade Hall stands on the site and is now the home of the Halle Orchestra.
34. An adaptation of a sentence from the Rights of Man by Thomas Paine. The correct wording is “My country is the world; my religion is to do good”.
39. A tenter is a person who attends engines.
40. Mycroft is a common name in the area and seems to have been included as a middle name in the Silcock family.
41. Derbsyhire Courier, 18 November 1848.
42. Ibid.
44. Ibid. p. 55.
45. Ibid. See p. 59.
46. Information from Emma Miller’s granddaughter who lives at Lota, a Brisbane bayside suburb. She was born after Emma’s death but collects many anecdotes related to her by her parents.
47. In 1851, Adolf Singer patented the first successful sewing machine, though its original inventor, in 1831, was a French tailor. Singer also introduced the hire-purchase system.
48. The Women’s Union Journal, the organ of the Women’s Protective and Provident League, April 1876.


51. The Women's Union Journal, September 1876.

52. The Women's Union Journal, April 1876. Reprinted from the Manchester Guardian, 10 April 1876.


54. Women’s Suffrage Journal of the Manchester Suffrage Society, 2 January 1871.

55. Many future leaders of the labour movement were said to have learnt their oratory at Chapel.


57. The Working Class Library (Salford) has a 70-year-old framed illuminated print of this quote in its Exhibition Room.

58. Annie Besant later followed Theosophy, living many years in India.

2. **The hope of something better**

1. Henry Lawson, 'Something Better'.


3. Queensland State Archives IMM/116, pp. 232-33, 321, 368. Emma’s age would have been 39.


5. *Brisbane Courier*, 3 March 1879.


7. Both anecdotes from Peg Peters.


11. The 1880 census shows that the majority of people then lived within the city area — 32,571 in the city, 19,112 in the suburbs.

12. A plaque near the Titles Office entrance, Edward Street, Brisbane, draws attention to a few bricks from the Normal School that were incorporated in the building. The school stood on the site from 1862 to 1927.


22. *Brisbane Courier*, 21 September 1888. (Paper on Women’s Influence presented to WCTU by Miss Wright.)

23. *Brisbane Courier*, 5 September 1899. (Factory inspectors’ report.)

24. *Worker*, September 1890. (May Jordan’s speech at the formation of the first women’s union.)


26. *Boomerang*, 9 February 1889. For details of Leontine Cooper’s life, see Appendix A.

27. Ibid.


31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. George Street appears on maps of the period where Pearson Street is today.

3 These things we intend to alter

1. Jim Crawford, ‘It’s Nice to be a Lady’.


4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.


9. Ibid.


14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.
17. Ibid. Girls who had no lunch rooms and who had to eat by their machines would have been gratified to have a more pleasant change of environment.

18. Ibid.


20. Ibid.


22. The 1891 census showed that domestic servants comprised about 45 per cent of the female workforce.


25. Such institutions as the Brisbane Industrial Home (formed 1883) trained "fallen women" in domestic work.


27. *Worker*, July 1890.

28. *Emigration to Queensland*, 1899. Leaflet aimed at domestics. (Held by John Oxley Library.)


32. *Boomerang*, 21 February 1891.


35. *Worker*, August 1890. L.C. could be Leontine Cooper. The letter took Lucinda Sharpe (alias William Lane) to task for exaggerating the poor conditions of girls in service.

36. McDonnell & East store, George Street, still has reference to workrooms — Dressmakers, Milliners, Tailors — on its wall facing Tank Street.

37. *Worker*, 17 July 1903.

38. *Worker*, September 1890.


40. George Calderwood's notice of dismissal. (Courtesy Peg Peters.)


44. *Telegraph*, 1 January 1894.

45. Ibid.

46. *Worker*, May 1890.

47. The *Boomerang* of 14 July 1888 estimates there were 80,000 school-age children of the time, and that average daily attendance was 35,319.
49. Royal Commission, 1891, pp. 1-15. (Frank McDonnell evidence.)
50. Ibid., p. 19. (W. Walsh testimony.)
51. Ibid., p. 39. (T. Penlington testimony.)
52. Ibid., pp. 29-37. (Thomas Finney testimony.)
53. Worker, 16 April 1892.
54. Royal Commission, 1891, p. xlvi.
55. Worker, 5 May 1894.
56. Frank McDonnell became a partner with Herbert East in 1901 in Mc­
   Donnell & East department store in George Street.

4 A disgrace to our common humanity

3. Ibid., p. xl.
4. Royal Commission, 1891, pp. 134-35. (J. Beal's testimony.)
5. Ibid., p. 73. (Alfred Allen’s testimony.)
6. Ibid., pp. 183-189. (John Beck’s testimony.)
7. Ibid., p. 248. (P. McLachlan testimony.)
8. Ibid., p. 297. (Charles Harley’s testimony.)
9. Ibid., pp. 285-87. (John Gregg, Secretary of the United Furniture
   Trade Union.)
10. Ibid., pp. 124-29. (Miss Nixon's testimony. She stated that up to that
    time the union had not raised issues relating to wages and condi­
    tions.)
11. Ibid., pp. 183-89. (John Beck’s testimony.)
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., p. 42. (Solomon Rosenthal’s testimony.)
14. Ibid., pp. 205-7. (Emma Miller’s testimony. The job she applied for
    was at a factory near the Plough Inn, Stanley Street.)
15. Ibid., p. 217. (Thomas Beattie’s testimony.)
16. Ibid., p. 282. (Richard Pike’s testimony.)
17. Royal Commission, 1891, Commissioners' First Report, p. xxxv.
19. Ibid., p. xluii.
20. Royal Commission, 1891, p. xlvi. (Dr James Booth's rider to the sec­
    ond report. He was expressing shock at the conditions of work of
    Mrs Harpham’s job at the Virginia boot factory.)
23. Ibid., p. 1155.
24. Ibid., p. 1144. (Quote from Evening Observer, 7 October 1896.)
25. Ibid., p. 1145. (Quote from Evening Observer, 10 August 1896.)
26. Worker, 1 September 1900.
27. Brisbane Courier, 5 September 1899. (Report of Edith Smith, factory inspector.)

5 Freedom's ardent and consuming flame

3. W.G. Spence, History of the AWU (Sydney: Workers Trustees Press, 1961), p. 73. To-day, this may seem an extreme reaction to scabs, but it indicates the deep and hostile feeling against those workers. Rather than unite with their mates to improve their impoverished conditions, people felt, they had thought only of their own immediate situation, and by continuing to work had actually aided the employers in breaking strikes and worsening conditions.
6. Daily Standard, 23 October 1922. (J.S. Collings tribute at the unveiling of the marble bust of Emma Miller.)
9. T.J. Ryan (Tommy) — not to be confused with T.J. Ryan who in 1915 became Premier of Queensland. A memorial plaque close to the Tree of Knowledge pays tribute to the “loyalty, courage and sacrifice in 1891 of the stalwart men and women of the west from whom, beneath this tree, emerged Australia’s labour and political movement”.
11. Lloyd Ross, William Lane and the Australian Labor Movement, p. 142.
12. Jessie Ackerman, Australia from a Woman’s Point of View (Australia: Castell, 1913), pp. 46-47.
15. Worker, 25 January 1917. (Joe Collings’ tribute.)

6 One woman one vote

2. The WCTU campaigned for a less restrictive corset designed by a local doctor. The Telegraph, 29 September 1894, reported that Mrs Payne told the annual WCTU Convention that thirty Ipswich members had taken a stand by discarding their corsets altogether.


7. Widows and spinsters of the Isle of Man were granted the right to vote in 1881 soon after a widely supported visit from Lydia Becker of the Manchester Women’s Suffrage Society. It was not until 1918 that some women of Great Britain over the age of thirty got the vote; in 1928 the suffrage was extended to all women over the age of twenty-one.


12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.


15. When an all-male select committee opposed raising the age of consent for girls from ten to fourteen years but recommended it be twelve years, the WCTU petitioned Parliament. Politicians argued that the "deliberate, well-thought-out-opinion" of the select committee was of more value than the "hastily and crudely formed sentimental opinions of women." (*QPD*, Vol. 63, 7 October 1891, p. 184.)

16. The WCTU also campaigned against the *Act for the Suppression of Contagious Diseases (CD Act)* because of its double standards.


20. Ibid. Sir Charles Lilley supported many working-class activities and when representing the Fortitude Valley electorate was fondly referred to as "Lilley of the Valley".

21. Ibid.


26. Ibid.


29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

33. *Telegraph*, 20 April 1894.
34. *Brisbane Courier*, 30 April 1894.
35. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. *Brisbane Courier*, 26 May 1894.
42. *Telegraph*, 29 June 1894.
43. *Telegraph*, 4 October 1894.
44. Joe Harris, *The Bitter Fight*, p. 137. First published in the conservative *The Country*, 28 July 1894. To capture South Australian women's vote, the United Labour Party reprinted the article in leaflet form (1894). The article was also used in *The Worker* to denounce conservative attitudes to votes for women during the 1912 Queensland state elections.
45. *Telegraph*, 1 September 1894.
46. *Worker*, 30 August 1894.
47. *Worker*, 8 June 1895; 15 June 1895.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Extracts from suffrage report, WCTU Convention 1897, prepared by Isobel McCorkindale.
52. Extract from suffrage report WCTU Convention 1898.
54. Ibid.
55. *Worker*, 9 May 1903.
56. "Suffragist" is the original dictionary term for a person "who attaches importance to the suffrage". The word "suffragette", which has moved into common usage, was reputed to have been coined by a London newspaper to trivialise the militancy of the Pankhurts and their organisation. Actually "suffragist" was rarely used in Brisbane newspapers during the course of the campaign. After 1907 "suffragette" was often used, particularly in reference to the British "Votes for Women" activity.
57. *Brisbane Courier*, 6 March 1899.
58. *Brisbane Courier*, 2 March 1899.
59. There were many changes in premiers during the suffrage campaign— October 1893 H.M. Nelson; April 1898 T.J. Byrne (died five months later); October 1898 J.R. Dickson; 1 December 1899 A. Dawson; 7 December 1899 R. Philp; September 1903 A. Morgan, Liberal Premier in the Coalition Government (W. Kidston was the Labour Treasurer).
7 Are you on the roll?

2. Brisbane Courier, 4 March 1903.
3. Brisbane Courier, 3 July 1903.
4. QWEL Box, 1903, Minutes QWEL General Meetings (1903-1908). (Held in John Oxley Library.)
5. Dr Eveleen Ashworth, History of Queensland Women’s Electoral League (QWEL), p. 5. (Typescript, John Oxley Library.)
6. See E. Ashworth, History of Queensland Women’s Electoral League, p. 4. (Typescript, John Oxley Library.)
7. The dismissal of Elizabeth Fewings from the Girls’ Grammar School in 1899 led to public debate. A public meeting and letters — including those from Leontine Cooper and May McConnel — supported the headmistress. Dr. Lilian Cooper, who migrated to Brisbane in 1891, was the first woman to practise Medicine in Queensland.
8. E. Ashworth, — History of QWEL, p. 4.
10. Worker, 14 March 1903.
11. “In a Woman’s Mind” (IWM), Worker, 14 March 1903.
12. Worker, 19 September 1903. The words “For the time being only” refer to an early statement by Premier Digby Denham.
13. Worker, 25 January 1917. (Obituary for Emma Miller.)
14. Worker, 12 December 1906.
15. “IWM”, Worker, 9 May 1903. Charlotte Stetson, the American socialist writer, is better known as Charlotte Perkins Gilman, after her second marriage in 1900.
17. “IWM”, Worker, 19 September 1903.
18. Ibid.
20. “IWM”, Worker, 11 July 1903.
22. "IWM", *Worker*, 12 December 1906. Mrs Finney was outlining her 1903 election-day routine as a suggestion for others to follow.


24. Ibid.


32. *Worker*, 30 January 1904. (Social Democratic Vanguard report.)


34. "IWM", *Worker*, 21 January 1905.


41. Ibid.

42. *Worker*, 4 February 1905.

43. "IWM", *Worker*, 4 February 1905.

44. Ibid.


46. "IWM", *Worker*, 23 February 1907.

47. *Worker*, 30 June 1904. (Social Democratic Vanguard report.)


8 **Did Emma Miller somersault?**


2. William Breen to F. Baunsch, Mitchell WPO, 26 September 1906, AWU Charleville letterbook (August 1906 — March 1907), Australian Workers Union Records (Canberra: Archives of Business and Labour, E161A/33.)

3. William Breen to Mrs Lynch, 24 September 1906. (AWU Records E161A/33.)


7. "Mrs Miller on Tour", *Worker*, 18 October 1906.


9. Ibid.
10. Ibid. "Patsy" refers to local member Patsy Leahy who also produced the *Charleville Times*.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. William Breen to J. Smith, 5 October 1906. (AWU Records, E161/M46/33.)

14. William Breen to Albert Hinchcliffe, 8 October 1906. (AWU Records, E161/M46/33.)

15. Ibid.


18. Ibid.


23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.


27. D. Espie to Editor, *Worker*, 3 November 1906.


29. Ibid.; *Worker*, 27 October 1906.


33. "IWM”, *Worker*, 8 November 1906.

34. William Breen to Editor, *Daily Mail*, 26 October 1906. (AWU Records, E161/M46/33.)

35. "Mrs Miller's Denial”, *Worker*, 27 October 1906.


37. AWU Annual Report, Charleville, 17 June 1907; Minutes of Annual Reports and Balance Sheets — Longreach, Hughenden, Charleville, 1906-1912. (AWU Records, E154/47.)

38. "To the Women of Queensland" (QWEL leaflet), April 1907. Written by Mr Perry, a *Brisbane Courier* journalist. (Held in John Oxley Library.)

39. QWEL leaflet, November 1903.


41. "IWM”, *Worker*, 2 March 1907.

42. *Daily Mail*, 21 May 1907.


44. Longreach AWU Minutes, 1907. (AWU Records, E154/47.)


47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. *Daily Mail*, 22 May 1907.
50. *Truth*, 1 September 1907.
52. Ibid. The postal vote was a big issue to the Labour Party, and Emma's part in the campaign received special mention at the unveiling of her marble bust.
53. "IWM", *Worker*, 1 February 1908.
54. Ibid.
55. "IWM", *Worker*, 8 February 1908.

9 *Splendid women in the movement*

1. *Worker*, 5 April 1902.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Louise Michel was the French anarchist who manned the barricades during the time of the Paris Commune, and was militantly active in the interests of French working people. She was at one time imprisoned at the French penal institution in New Caledonia.
10. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
22. *Daily Standard*, 27 January 1917. ("Marietta" tribute to Emma Miller.)
25. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
33. *Worker*, 16 October 1909.
42. Andrew Fisher had been Prime Minister from 13 November 1908 until 2 June 1909 when Labour withdrew its support for the Deakin Liberals and the Governor-General called on Fisher to form a government.
44. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
50. *Worker*, 25 June 1910. The Women Workers’ Union was taken over by the Charleville AWU at the women’s wish in 1914 and Mrs Smith was appointed a temporary organiser.
51. *Worker*, 1 April 1911.
52. *Worker*, 8 April 1911.

10 The wearin’ o’ the badge

7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
262 Notes and references

12. The Domain was Brisbane’s public forum area, reached by walking along the Botanic Gardens river path to spare ground at about the reach of the river. It is now part of the QUT complex.
13. Jessie Ackerman, *Australia From a Woman’s Point of View* (Sydney: Cassell, 1913), pp. 177-8. Jessie was an American journalist who assisted with the organisation of WCTU branches in Australia. At one time she was the WCTU’s Australasian president.
15. Lloyd Rees, *Peaks and Valleys* (Sydney: William Collins 1985) p. 74. Lloyd Rees and his brother Vernon were sworn in to protect the Taringa area — their headquarters was a tent in a paddock of long grass next to the local state school.
18. Ibid. “Shank’s Pony” meaning “to go on foot”. (Usually Shanks’s Pony”.)
22. *Brisbane Courier*, 3 February 1912.
24. *Telegraph*, 2 February 1912. It also reported that the police were armed with rifles with thirty rounds of ammunition in powder.
25. The Belle Vue Hotel, George Street, was a beautiful building with wrought iron railings — a landmark and for many years a centre of Brisbane’s social life. Brisbane people were angered in 1979 when the Bjelke-Petersen Government had the building demolished in the early hours of the morning. The University was in the old Government House building, now occupied by QUT.
29. PRE/A415 Chief Sec. 04252, p. 30 (QA). Police Commissioner Cahill in his report also wrote that Emma Miller had made allegations of brutality by special constables at Red Hill.
31. *Truth*, 11 February 1912. This assertion didn’t appear in either the *Worker* or the strike bulletins — perhaps it was a rumour based on a belief that the unconscious man was dead. On the other hand no writs were taken out against the newspaper for making such accusations against the police.
32. *Worker*, 10 February 1912.
34. *Worker*, 19 February 1912.
38. Ibid.
39. Joe Harris, unpublished research.
41. QWEL to Badger, 7 February 1912, QWEL Executive Committee Reports (3 August 1911 — 27 August 1914). (Held by John Oxley Library.)
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. President’s Report, WCTU Convention, 1912.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
47. Australian Boot Trade Employees Federation (Queensland) Minutes, 25 September 1916. Included in instructions to delegates to the 1916 National Trade Union Congress in response to a resolution calling for a general strike against conscription. (Canberra — Archives of Business and Labour T49/1/7.)
51. Worker, 1 May 1912.
52. Official Election Bulletin, 63, 16 April 1912. In 1959, a play by Jim Crawford, Billets and Badges, based on the 1912 strike and the twin themes of free unionism and women’s rights, was produced in Brisbane. One night a strike veteran rose to his feet as the actress portraying Emma Miller appeared. “There she is, there’s Emma Miller”, he called and later went back stage and emotionally told of the love and respect she had inspired in all who knew her.
54. See Ellen Hewett “Appeal to Women”, Worker, 30 March 1912.
55. Official Election Bulletin 72, 26 April 1912.
58. Daily Standard, 10 April 1913.
59. Ibid.
60. Ibid.
61. Worker, 2 April 1914.
64. JSC Worker, 12 February 1917.
65. This poem was printed on a thick card with a gold edging and was set to music and sung during the play, Billets and Badges. (Courtesy Peg Peters.)
11 The world is my country

1. Alfred Tennyson, 'Locksley Hall'. This verse also appeared in the Worker in 1908 headed "Socialism" and captioned "The Workers Ideal".
2. Lloyd Rees, Peaks and Valleys, p. 86.
3. The Red Cross and VAD groups were formed throughout Australia.
7. Daily Standard, 1 September 1914.
8. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Worker, 30 March 1915.
13. Ibid.
14. WPA Membership Booklet. (Courtesy C. Beckingham.)
17. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
26. From a handwritten report of a speech given by Mabel Lane in the 1930s. (Courtesy C. Beckingham.)
27. Daily Standard, 10 November 1915.
30. Minutes of the Industrial Council, 10 November 1915. 830330 — 4, Box 8, Fryer Library.
31. Percy Mandeno to Editor, Daily Standard, 10 February 1917.
32. Daily Standard, 9 December 1915.
34. Woman Voter, 27 April 1916.
35. Woman Voter, 25 May 1916.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Official Reports of Annual Delegate Meetings, AWU (Brisbane), January 1914 — January 1938, MSO/IC.
42. Daily Standard, 16 December 1916.
44. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
47. Daily Standard, 23 October 1922.
48. Information from Dorothy Beckingham (now deceased).
49. "Miss Pankhurst’s Tour", Daily Standard, 2 September 1916.
51. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. Extract from the letter to the author from an anti-conscriptionist, Dick Surplus (now deceased).
58. Mabel Lane, handwritten report on the anti-conscription campaign. (Courtesy C. Beckingham.)
60. Ibid.
61. Worker, 11 January 1917.
63. Mabel Lane report.

12 Our brave little fighter is gone

5. Ibid.
6. Mrs Thorp to George Calderwood. (Courtesy Peg Peters.)
8. Daily Standard, 23 October 1922. A reference by Mrs Skirling to people’s feeling at the time of Emma’s passing.
9. Worker, 8 February 1917.
13. "Mother Jones" was an American rebel who, when well into her eighties, continued her activities in the interests of American workers.


15. Ross's Magazine, 17 February 1917. Ross's Magazine was a socialist Melbourne paper, fondly known as "Ross's." It was owned and published by Bob Ross who was specially mentioned by Emma after her 1916 Melbourne visit.


19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.


23. Woman Voter, 1 February 1917.


27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.


32. James Lawrence Watts was one of the founders of the Queensland Art Society (now Royal Queensland Art Society). The Brisbane Trades and Labor Council lent the marble bust of Emma Miller for the Society's Centenary Exhibition, May-June 1987.

33. Daily Standard, 23 October 1922.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

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Emma Miller will always be remembered for jabbing the Police Commissioner's horse with her hatpin during the 1912 Tramways Strike.

Pam Young's long-awaited biography of Emma Miller traces the history of the female suffrage movement, the formation of unions for women and the female vote against conscription.

A foundation member of the Labor Party, Emma Miller was one of the leaders of the women's suffrage movement. As President of the Woman's Equal Franchise Association, she saw Australian women win the federal vote in 1902, the first women in the world to be able to vote in a federal election.

This fascinating story takes place during the turbulent formation of the labour movement in Queensland, and includes the early campaign for equal rights for women. Emma Miller's courage and energy were unmatched during these struggles, earning her the title of "Mother Miller" and "the grand old Labour woman of Queensland".

Cover design by Craig Glasson using a photograph of Emma Miller. Courtesy of Peg Peters.