

Missing Women: Recovering and Replacing Female Activists in Australian Labour History

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Abstract

There is relatively little research about women in labour councils and labour federations. Focusing on the historical and contemporary uses and impact of separate organising, this paper explores key developments in shaping patterns of women's activism through the experiences of women unionists in an Australian labour federation.

Résumé

Ceci est plus ou moins petite une recherche sur les femmes dans les conseils du travail et dans les fédérations du travail. En se concentrant l'utilisation historique et contemporaine des syndicats, cet article explore les développements clés qui ont contribué à façonner l'activisme des femmes par les expériences de femmes syndicalistes dans une fédération de travail en Australie.

In recent years, women have frequently occupied key leadership positions in labour councils and federations, the collective union bodies that trade unions in many countries have formed at the regional, provincial, state, and national levels. In Australia, we can point to women like Sharan Burrow of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU). In North America, there is Barbara Byers of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and Linda Chavez-Thompson of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO). Yet, in Australia and elsewhere, there is actually little known about the historical role of women in these collective union bodies (henceforth referred to as "peak unions"). When a woman, Gail Cotton, was elected to the Executive of the Victorian Trades Hall Council, a state-level labour federation, in Victoria, Australia, in the late 1970s, she was heralded as the first woman when in fact she followed in the footsteps of at least five women, one of whom had served on that Executive for eight years between 1901 and 1909 (The Age, 10 June 1978, 5; The Herald, 8 June 1978, 1). These women, like many others, were rendered invisible, their contribution missing from the collective organisational memory, and thus written out of labour history.

At best, our knowledge of the history of female activism at this level is fragmentary. Two recent histories of Australian labour federations reveal a common pattern: early women activists of the 1890s-1910s era are discussed but then women disappear from the narrative for more than fifty years until the 1970s, leaving us uncertain as to whether women actually disappeared or were forgotten (Markey

1994; Oliver 2003). To some extent, this chronological gap is not entirely surprising. While the outpouring of feminist labour histories over the last several decades has brought to light the lives of countless labour women, and helped correct the male bias in the field, many women activists remain missing from the historical record. Indeed, Rosemary Webb (1997, 380) speaks of undertaking "an odd kind of trawling exercise" when trying to find and follow trade union women in the interwar years in Australia. In Lake's (1999) history of Australian feminism, union women make only periodic appearances.

The 2005 Labouring Feminism conference in Toronto showcased an impressive array of recent scholarship on an ever-widening range of female labour subjects, but what was still evident was feminist scholars' continuing recovery of forgotten labour women and female activists whose workplace militancy was first marginalized or downplayed by contemporary and subsequent accounts, and then forgotten, with women often only remembered in supportive roles. Notwithstanding the many histories of women in trade unions across the globe, the role of women and female activism in peak unions remains under-studied. All this suggests that reclaiming women's activism at every level, and reinscribing their strategies, wins and losses, and their legacy into the history of the labour movement remains critically important.

This article contributes to this feminist labour project by redressing the chronological gap in our knowledge of different generations of women activists in the Victorian Trades Hall Council (THC). Focusing on the use of separate and autonomous organizing strategies adopted by women, the article shows that there were three pivotal periods of female organizing: the 1882-83 tailoresses' strike and its legacy; the years immediately following the (long overdue) granting of suffrage to Victorian women in 1908; and the years after International Women's Year

in 1975. In each case, a wave of women's activism was ushered into unions and the THC more broadly, reshaping the space of the THC, and in turn highlighting the intersection of gender and space in peak unions.

Peak Unions, Space and Gender

In recent years, research on peak unions has increased in Australia. Nevertheless, in a pattern replicated in North America, they remain comparatively under-researched. This is despite labour councils and federations being formed by unions in the nineteenth century at relatively early stages of union development, as was the case in both Canada and Australia (Brigden 2003; Forsey 1982). Alongside, and in some cases related to, this growing interest in analysing the role and purpose of these peak unions has been increased interest amongst Australian industrial relations scholars and labour historians in exploring how analysis of the key geographic concepts of space, place and scale can contribute to the study of industrial relations and, in particular, trade unionism (Bailey 2001; Ellem, Markey and Shields 2004; Herod, Peck and Wills 2003). As a consequence, dialogue has been fostered with, and research influenced by, human geographers who have been instrumental in the development of the sub-discipline of "labour geography" (Brigden 2005; Herod 1998 & 2001; Wills 1998).

Within the evolving labour geography research, most attention has been focused on trade unions, with limited exploration of peak unions. Nevertheless, they are fertile ground for a spatially aware analysis when interpreting their role and purpose. For instance, labour councils and federations have carved out their own space building labour halls (commonly called "trades halls" in Australia and "labour temples" in North America). The formation of peak unions, especially in the nineteenth century, was done by men for men, as was the space creation.

What was thus created was gendered space, so that when women unionists entered that space, they typically encountered a redolently male space (Brigden 2005). Clearly, for women, "space matters." This article draws attention to, and begins to explore aspects of the gendered material space encountered by women in the THC, as a backdrop to its focus on replacing women. The insights of feminist geographers such as Hanson and Pratt (1995), Massey (1994), McDowell (1997 & 1999) and Spain (1992), to name just a few, enable us to explore these gendered spaces of peak unions, heightening our understanding of women's patterns of organizing and activism. For example, as women confronted male-constructed and dominated space, they moved from an accepted feminine private space into a masculine public space (McDowell 1997). Where women were accepted into the public domain, it was often into segregated spaces and into spaces that the men, who sought to maintain male-dominated spaces, created for them. Spain argues that women are disadvantaged by such gendered spatial segregation because it "separate[s] women from knowledge used by men to produce and reproduce power and privilege" (1992, 3). But while it seems clear that such segregation has adversely affected women, women activists have also strategically used spatial segregation in a deliberate attempt to create gendered space in order to increase their voice and their agency, as Dorothy Sue Cobble cogently argues in her study of waitress unionism and the adoption of separate and autonomous organizing (1991).

Both separate organizing, which is organizationally bound (women's committees within unions) and autonomous organizing, which takes place outside of institutions (forming women-only unions) have been adopted by different generations of Australian (and other) women activists (Briskin 1993). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women formed female sections in existing unions and

their own unions, providing space for women's voices and enabling women's agency. Contemporary developments have similarly shown how women unionists, through affirmative action positions and women's committees, have "ensured a voice for women in these forums" and been critical to the successful passage of their recommendations (Elton 1997, 110). Women's use of separate organizing strategies with mobilization, not separatism, as the desired outcome, remains a key strategy. Julie White has argued that in Canadian peak unions, women's committees are a "critical base of women's activity inside the union movement" through which "their demands [get] onto both the convention floor and the negotiating table" (1997, 94), while Briskin has suggested that the 1990 women's conference organised by the CLC was a turning point in Canadian women's organizing, with events leading the union leadership to support increased separate organizing for women (1993, 89). We now turn to the story of Victorian women unionists, tracing their patterns of activism, including the uses of separate and autonomous organizing in the THC.

Patterns of Women's Activism in the Trades Hall Council

In order to explore and assess the historical patterns of activism among different generations of women unionists in Victoria, we must fill in the chronological gaps that abound. Apart from the earliest activists, numerous treatments of Australian peak unions offered episodic attention to campaigns for equal pay in the 1920s and 1930s and to particular activists, most often equal pay advocates like Muriel Heagney. As Raymond has observed, in between these two events, there was "an enormous gap where working women seem to have disappeared from the political and union stage" (1988, 41-42). As a consequence, the broader participation of women in the THC has been overlooked, a pattern persisting

through the inter-war years and most of the post-war period. In the years following the 1882/83 Tailoresses' strike, the key periods for women's peak union activism in the THC were the post-suffrage years and the years following International Women's Year in 1975.

The post-suffrage period, which shaped activism through the 1910s before dissipating in the 1930s, was characterised by the adoption of both autonomous and separate organizing. Any impetus to the organizing of women during World War Two was transitory as women's presence and influence in the THC through the postwar years progressively faded, to the point where, for a month in 1972, there were no women delegates at all. In 1975, the presence of women more than doubled and then accelerated in the following years. In this period, there was a return to the strategy of separate organizing that in turn led to the advocacy and adoption of affirmative action within the THC itself in the late 1980s and 1990s.

The 1882/3 Tailoresses' Strike and Its Legacy

The first time that Victorian women unionists are usually discussed in the context of the THC is in relation to the 1882-83 Tailoresses' strike and the formation of the Victorian Tailoresses' Union. Often cited as a hugely symbolic event, much analysis of the strike tends to centre on the ramifications for THC, rather than the women (Brooks 1983). Frances' analysis remedies this through her exploration of the strike's gendered dimensions (1993, 33-34).

At least three significant effects of the strike for the relationship between the women and the THC can be identified. First, the strike affected women's peak union strategy. Notable for the women's militancy, the strike contributed to the increased industrial role of the THC, as it assumed tactical and financial responsibility for the strike, something not commonly done in disputes. We thus have a clear case of women affecting the strategic direction of the

THC, their agency and activism having a direct and, moreover, an ongoing effect on the peak union. While it may have been initially seen as extending assistance to needy women strikers, the coordinating and supporting strategy of the THC in industrial disputes was then extended to all other (male) unions.

The re-shaping of labour's space was a second consequence of the strike. Following the strike, the THC undertook to build a hall for the women. The Female Operatives Hall, opening in 1883, provided dedicated space for women unionists. This transformation of THC space, in creating a union space for women, arguably gave them a place of their own. But it also reinforced a gendered hierarchy - the main space remained the THC building - and involved a degree of female inclusion but also separation. The male leadership thought that the Female Hall enabled the Trades Hall Committee "to provide for the amusement of the females who can attend at night for lectures and thereby be kept off the streets" (Kellaway 1988, 7). Thus there appeared ambivalence about the degree to which women were accepted into the Trades Hall space. That sense of separation continued, with unionists in the 1930s speaking of walking "from the Female Hall through the paddock into the Trades Hall building" (Pearce 1997, 106).

The third effect of the strike was the impetus to women's activism, ushering in the first generation of women union activists. While in Brooks' 1983 account we learn little about the striking tailoresses or their leaders due to his focus on the role of the THC and its male secretary to the exclusion both of the role of the union and of the women unionists, as Frances (1993, 24; 32) points out, the strike built on the earlier union activism and organizing efforts of tailoresses, which dated back to 1874. The union drew on these women's previous experiences of taking industrial action: one of the strike leaders, Ellen Cresswell, for example, had participated in a strike in 1879. Other women

activists and leaders included Scottish-born Mrs Helen Robertson, Mrs Lucy Moodie and Mrs Sarah Muir, all of whom would later make their mark on the THC. Just as male unionists extended their activism from the workplace to the colonial and inter-colonial stage, these women activists also engaged with the broader union movement, with the Tailoresses' sending delegates to three Inter-colonial Trades Union Congresses (Nicol 1979, 20 note 11).

Following the strikes and depression of the 1890s, when many unions foundered, including the tailoresses', women workers at the turn of the twentieth century consolidated their positions. Activists such as Helen Robertson and Lucy Moodie (who appears to be the first woman delegate to the THC. Labor Call, 1 February 1912, 1) developed profiles as activists that in many ways mirrored those of their male comrades, who were active in their workplaces, their unions and in the THC. In December 1900, while Moodie was elected to the THC's Organising Committee, Robertson was elected to the THC Executive. Successfully contesting seven elections, she remained on the Executive until January 1909, thus arguably becoming part of the leadership of the Victorian union movement in this first decade of the twentieth century (THC Council minutes, 1900-1909 election results).

The Post-suffrage Years

Following the achievement of female suffrage for Victorian women in 1908, a vigorous organizing campaign of women workers adopted both separate and autonomous organizing with women's unions, as well as female sections of existing unions, forming around 1910. Drawing on and extending previous organizing efforts by women unionists, the commitment of middle-class feminists active in labour politics, for example, Minnie Felstead and Ellen Mulcahy, assisted the organizing campaigns not only by organizing women into unions but also providing

leadership support as office bearers in some unions. Workplace-based meetings attracted many women: three hundred clothing workers attended a meeting in August 1911, leading to an increase in union membership. Rank-and-file members became active: "women who kindly consented to act as shop delegates are doing splendid work, and assisting the union materially" (Labor Call 24 August 1911, 1).

While the tailoresses and tailors amalgamated to form the Clothing Trades Union (CTU) in 1907, women in other branches of the clothing industry maintained and formed occupational unions (for example, the Dressmakers, Garment Workers, Whiteworkers, and the Shirt and Collar Workers). All of these affiliated with the THC. Other existing THC affiliates with large numbers of women members, such as the Tobacco Workers, Cardboard Box and Carton Employees, and Rubber Workers, included women delegates from 1908, as did the re-formed Domestic Workers Union.

The THC initially promoted the organizing of women, with a committee appointed in 1910, a women's organizing fund and a women's organiser, Felstead (a delegate for the Domestic Workers) elected for six months (Brigden 2007, 3). However, this effort was short-lived because, although the 1911 organizing report recommended that special attention be given to female unions, no new resources were forthcoming and no special organiser elected (Labor Call 7 September 1911, 2).

By the end of 1912, an estimated 31 forums representing women workers existed, including women representatives of male unions (Raymond 1988, 45-46). The upsurge in organizing women's unions had parallels both interstate and internationally: in the United States, the period up to World War One represented "the height of the movement for separate female organizations" (Cobble 1991, 62). Not "merely a product of nor reaction to the discrimination of male workers," Cobble argues

that "although a consensus on separatism as a strategy never existed among working women, in certain periods and in certain trades, women themselves pushed for separate-sex organizations" (1991, 62). Such mobilisation of women was also seen in Canada but as Frances, Kealey and Sangster (1996) remind us, this organizing of women was sometimes part of an exclusionary wage strategy pursued by male unionists to protect men's jobs.

With the women's unions affiliating with the THC, autonomous organizing was not being used as a form of separatism designed to divide the union movement. The women clearly saw themselves as unionists and as part of the labour movement. For instance, the rules of the Women Bookbinders' and Stationery Employees Union included a specific clause expressly providing for affiliation with the THC. Even where these unions drew on male assistance, their THC delegations were mostly women, creating an opportunity for women to participate more broadly in the union movement. While only a handful of women may have been present at any particular THC meeting, the space of the THC thus began to diversify: on the floor of Council, in meeting rooms and union offices. With there being no indication that women had separate seating in the Council chamber, it is likely that there were pockets of women, who as delegates from the same union sat together. From eleven in 1909 to eighteen women in 1910 to the thirty-four credentialled delegates in 1911 (an estimated 10% of all delegates), these women, and the members they represented, transformed the THC space: no longer were they contained or containable to the Female Operatives Hall.

Women from both the women's unions and mixed unions contested THC elections, with some success. Following Robertson's lengthy term, between 1912 and 1923, four more women were elected to the executive: Mrs A. Jones (a Rubber Workers' shop steward and executive member) in 1912/13; Sara

Lewis (Female Hotel and Caterers) in 1913; Muriel Heagney (Clerks) in 1921; and Nelle Rickie (Theatricals) in 1923. From 1910, women, primarily from the women-only unions, served on the THC's Organising Committee. Apart from the six year term of Mary Rogers (Office Cleaners), most of the women came on for one or two years at the most, which meant more women gained a profile in the THC through their committee experience. The women's presence shaped debates about equal pay, women's work and wages, motherhood and child endowment, issues they debated not only within the THC but in public forums as well (Lake 1999, 98-100). As Cooper (2002, 50) found in her study of the organizing committee of Labor Council of New South Wales between 1900 and 1910, where a small group of women activists managed to influence the agenda to a degree that "well exceeded their under-representation," women's active presence makes a difference.

The strategy of autonomous organizing proved successful as the women's unions undoubtedly contributed to an increased voice and, arguably, influence of women in the years before, during and immediately after World War One. Nevertheless, despite being joined by women delegates from affiliates as diverse as the Photographic Employees, Ammunition and Cordite Workers, Felt Hat Trimmers, Hospital Attendants, Musicians, and the Jam, Sauce and Pickle Workers during and after World War One, this influence was not sustained. Despite THC discussion in 1916 about the further organizing of women, nothing eventuated: no organisers and no funding. Women's participation, linked to the fate of the women's unions, then began to decline (Nolan 1991, 118-19).

Other than the Female Confectioners Union, not many of the women's unions survived their first decade as broader debates about union power and organisation combined in a contrary strategy that worked against their long-term viability. In 1911,

when the THC report was encouraging the formation of female unions, the THC began considering the issue of "closer organisation" and the reduction in number of small craft unions. These arguments, then extended by advocates for the One Big Union, proved more influential (Brigden 2007, 3). While the primary focus was on reducing the influence of craft unionism, and the purported advantages of industrial unionism, the effect on the mainly occupationally-based women's unions was to be absorption and amalgamation and, for the women, a muting of their voice. The outcome of amalgamation for women's representation was usually a negative one, with fewer places available on THC delegations of merged unions. Moreover, although unions increased in size, affiliates were restricted to a maximum of four delegates. Consequently, the impact on women's voices was often significant. For example, following the amalgamations of the various clothing unions in 1915 and 1916, the presence of the clothing union activists in the THC fell by a third or more: from six to only one or two delegates. There were no attempts or strategies adopted in the THC to protect or preserve women's representation.

The experience of women in these mixed unions was indeed mixed. Women had to fight to retain a profile and influence, with the variable consequences for women activists following these mergers being seen by the differing experiences of two union secretaries. After the Office Cleaners and the Miscellaneous Workers Union merged in 1921, Florence Anderson (Office Cleaners) joined the leadership group, first as a full-time assistant state secretary and then state secretary from 1930, a position she held until she retired in the late 1940s. In contrast, Louisa Cross (Women Bookbinders) struggled to be elected as an organiser with the Printers Union after the 1920 merger, although she then held office until 1951 (Frances 1993, 120-22, 171).

The profile of THC women in the inter-war years saw a gradual decline in representation and

participation (Brigden 2007). Nevertheless, as Pearce reminisces about the 1930s, "amazing" women unionists like Muriel Heagney, Jean Daley and Florence Anderson "carried out pioneering work both in the Union Movement and the Labor Party" and "their dedicated work opened up the way for generations of women up until today. They were part of the feminist move towards liberation and leadership" (Pearce 1997, 44).

Until 1975, women's numbers in the post-war years were low but fairly stable: in the 1950s and 1960s, women delegates typically numbered in single figures, but in the late 1960s and early 1970s, they fell further to only one or two women delegates as the older activists retired (Brigden 2003, 121, 144, 238). Ironically, this coincided with the (partial) awarding of equal pay by the federal industrial tribunal (Lake 1999, 218). Of the activists who came to prominence in the late 1950s, such as Kath Williams (Liquor Trades Union) and Leonora Lloyd (Clerks), only Lloyd was still on delegation by the 1970s (and she retired in 1972). While these women were on delegation for many years, this was not a pattern replicated by women delegates in the late 1960s (Brigden 2003, 143-45, 241). The small numbers and higher turnover of women delegates by the late 1960s reduced the capacity for the sort of cross-generational support that women, such as the female bookbinders, had given each other in earlier decades (Frances 1993, 120) and diminished the networks identified by Webb as important sustenance (2005). In such an environment, there was little focus on organizing strategies, with a number of women delegates rarely attending Council meetings and with the more active women often divided by factional alliances, as was the case with Williams and Lloyd. Williams, a Communist, was a tireless campaigner for equal pay, acting as secretary (and only woman member) of the THC equal pay committee for many years, while Lloyd was Victorian vice president of the

right-wing Clerks' Union. Williams and Lloyd reflected the factional divide in the THC, reminding us that factional politics could and did divide women. Specific women's space, if only by then in name and commemoration, was lost in 1958, when Council approved demolition of the Female Hall: this then enabled the construction of the (gender-free) new building (Brigden 2003, 144, note 58).

International Women's Year and Beyond

The increase from 2 in 1973 to 7 in 1974 to 17 women delegates the following year, notably International Women's Year (IWY), ushered in an upsurge of activism not seen in many years. In 1979, over 30 women were credentialled by their unions, with the re-appearance of all-women delegations. Again, both existing affiliates (like the Tobacco Workers and Theatrical Employees) and new affiliates, including unions covering teachers, nurses, airline hostesses and mothercraft nurses, credentialled women (Brigden 2003, 251-54). This time, however, new affiliates were not necessarily newly-formed unions, but part of the wave of white collar and professional unions now choosing to identify as trade unions and, as a result, affiliating with peak unions like the THC. Many women represented unions with large female memberships, in which women were emerging as a new generation of leaders and activists, a pattern also seen in Canada (Frances et al. 1996, 83-84). Just as the broader political developments associated with suffrage campaigns helped shape the organizing of women, this period saw the influence of women's liberation activists and the women's movement, which re-asserted the gains to be made from both separate and autonomous organizing (Lake 1999, 237-41). Added to this was an increase in women's unionization, from just over a quarter in 1971 to nearly a third of Victorian unionists a decade later with the growth of unionised women outpacing that of men (Brigden 2003, 252).

Women contested THC elections for the first time since 1960. In 1979 Gail Cotton (Food Preservers) successfully ran for the executive, and although she only served a single term, women became regular candidates in executive elections. The struggle for a women's committee, however, reinforced the barriers these women delegates continued to encounter and the threat that separate organizing was seen to pose. Inclusion of one or two voices on existing committees where men still dominated was one thing; a committee of women seeking to influence THC policy was another. The women's committee proposal, coming after four women delegates attended the IWY Women and Politics conference, did not meet with mere indifference from the male-dominated leadership group. Clearly seeing this as a separatist strategy, THC Secretary Ken Stone declared, he could "see no value in setting up a sub-committee and thereby further fragmenting the Trade Union Movement in general" (THC Council minutes, 15 October 1975). Three years passed before the committee was established, underscoring the slowness with which THC space could be re-gendered (Brigden 2003, 258).

The inclusion of women candidates for leadership and executive positions by left-wing unions, as part of a general factional strategy to wrest control of the THC leadership in the 1980s, led to success. The first woman vice president, Judith Bornstein (Association of Draughting, Supervisory and Technical Employees), was elected in 1983, with Trish Caswell (Technical Teachers) becoming the first woman full-time elected officer in 1984 when she was elected industrial officer. Five years later, in June 1989, the THC elected its first woman president, Jan Armstrong (Hospital Employees, No.1 branch).

Despite these inroads and the appointment of a women's officer in the mid-1980s, women still only comprised 28% of Council delegates and 14% of the executive in 1990 (Nightingale 1991). Moreover, the spectre of union amalgamations again loomed,

though now there was greater awareness of possible negative effects for women. This time, separate organizing was used to change the THC. An affirmative action plan adopted in 1990 included THC-specific strategies: targets for the executive and committees (women to comprise half of each by the end of 1999); inclusion of three affirmative action positions (including an additional vice president) on the executive, plus the aim to rotate the presidency between men and women from 1991 onwards. Through such measures was the face and voice of the THC transformed.

The use of separate organizing by women in different periods of THC history supports Briskin's argument that the "meaning of separate organizing is always being negotiated, and reconstituted through struggle and resistance" with different contexts shaping historical and contemporary approaches (1993, 547). Whereas separate and autonomous organizing was contained to unions in the post-suffrage period, the contemporary adoption of separate organizing significantly extended to the reshaping of the THC itself: through the women's committee, the women's officer and then the use of affirmative action to significantly increase women's representation, voice and influence, recast the THC's gendered space, and ultimately recast the power dynamics between men and women in the THC.

Conclusion

During these three historical periods, separate organizing strategies had a positive effect on women's presence and influence in the THC: whether through the impact of the clothing trades activists after the tailoresses' strike; the women-only unions in the 1910s; the argument for a women's committee; or the adoption of affirmative action strategies to consolidate contemporary power sharing. Parallels can be drawn between the success of such strategies in the 1910s, when separate and autonomous organizing

were used, and the later adoption of separate organizing in the 1970s through to the 1990s. Broader political and industrial developments including female suffrage, the One Big Union and the women's movement all affected women's organisation and, in turn, significantly affected the perceived role and place of women in the THC. The absence of such strategies in the 1950s contributed to the fading face and voice of women in the THC, reinforcing it as male-dominated space.

The different nature of separate organizing in the 1910s and the 1990s led to different outcomes for women when the union movement adopted an amalgamation strategy. Where separate organizing did not internally change the power dynamics in the THC despite the number of women delegates, the women-only unions proved vulnerable to the internal power dynamics of each merger, with highly variable outcomes for women THC delegates. While women were obviously also vulnerable to the same power dynamics in the amalgamations that swept Australian trade unions in the early 1990s, internal changes to THC structures, including the impact of affirmative action positions, prevented a similar disappearance of women.

While exploration of these three periods extends our understanding of women in the THC, gaps remain. We need to extend our examination of women's influence on THC strategy and policy, beyond the advocacy of equal pay. Also requiring further analysis is women's different political and industrial experiences and how so many of them combined their union work with broader political activity, for example in the Labor Party and its women's committee, and the Communist Party following its formation in 1920. Only exploratory consideration of the intersection of gender and space in peak unions was possible in this paper, with more analysis needed. All of this promises to contribute to overcoming the disregard of women's activism and the reclaiming and replacing of activists

and their strategies into labour history.

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