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Memories of the Second World War (1939...1945)

CROW-BOX5-3/26-0003

By Ruth Crow June 1984

Introduction.

I was born in 1916 in Ballarat Vittoria. I was married in 1937 and in 1940 my first daughter was born and in 1942 my second daughter. Thus I was in my early twenties at the beginning of the Second World War and both my daughter were born during the war.

In these memories I am mainly dealing with the period after Japan enter the war(4th the end of the year I94I). We were living in Windsor(Vic) at this time, but shifted to Brunswick in September I943.

The War Effort and My Neighbours

I was an air raid warden and a war loans street secretary. These were voluntary responsibilities. I also did a course in First Air and Home Nursing. I gave Cettures a Emergency Catering

Each air raid warden looked after about thintyhonens. We had to visit c neighbours to help them black out their windows, look for fire hazards, note where the tap and hose were located and make sure each home had a bucke of sand (for use to smothher incendiary bombs). We also dug treenches in the playground of the state school and a little park.

On some Sunday mornings we would have air-maid exercises...mock air raid We had a team of about six teeenage boys who rode their bikes to deliver messages and who enjoyed running around with the air-raid rattle to war people to prepare for the raid. We would pretend that some people were injured (they would have a note on them saying what had to be attended to) and we would have to arrange first aid for the injured.

As the street secretary for war loans I had to cahvass ma neighbours and ask them to buy at least a 6penny war loan stamp every week, Then each week I would do the rounds and collect the sixpences (or more). In streets where every one contributed to the war loans stamps there were signs on the posts at the corners sayin g "This is a war savings street" and the war-saving secretary had a notice on the window of their home.

What I Would Have Miked to Do to Help the Wer Effort

I had studied to be a dietitian and would have dearly loved to help with the catering services which were being developed at the munition factoriand the wharves and other large war time industries. I beleived by was we very important to feed the peoble working to provide the weapons of war, properly. The Government had a very good catering scheme and my husband, who worked at the munition factory had a very nourishing meal, very cheaply every day.

I could not help with this scheme as I had children to care for.

Wartime Day Nurseries ... Women Must Work To Win

At the beginning of I942 I helped to form a group of women who campaigned forr day nurseries so more women could help in war time production.

We had the slogan "drogy "Nirserics so Women can Work to Win". W had two ways of bringing attention to this need. Firstly we set up a day nursery which became the model of how such a centre could be established. This was the South Yarra DayyNurserry Then, in addition we formed a coalition with a num ber of other women's groups and children's organisatio to lobby the Federal G overnment for money to fund d nurseries,

This centre

The establishment of the example of the South Yarra Nursery greatly encouraged the campaign for Federal Government to take some responsibility for the children of working mothers. There was an organisation called the Council for Women in War Work and another one called The Co-ordinating Committee for Child Care in Wartime. Irrepresented the South Yarra Day Nursery on the Committeee for Co-ordinating Child Care in Wartime.

The South Yarra Day Nursery also helped other groups of women to work together to establish day nurseries and by the end of 1942 or early km 1943 there were similar nurseriess in Kew, Caulfield and Hawthor All of these were run with the help of voluntary helpersum most of whom young mothers like I was. We were able to take our children to the day nursery. For example I went to the South Yarra Day Nursery with my two year old and my baby and I helped every day.

The Committee for Co-ordinating Child Care in Wartime became concerned about the care of school age children and it was decided to establish some type of care for children in Brunswick, In August 1943 I started work as the organising secretary of the Bruswick Children's Centre. I was paid from a grant received from the Commonwelth Government. This was the first funding received for children's services from the Commonwealth Government.

The Brunswick Children's Centre

The Brunswick Children's Centre cared for children from babies to teenagers. My responsibilities included the co-ordiation of the existical day nursery and kindergarten and the provision of a midday meal, after school activities and holiday play days for school age children.

The centre served children attending Albert St Central School, St. Ambrose Catholic S hool, the Brunswick Girls and School and the Brunswick Boys School. (We served meals to about one hundred children The meal was a hot two course meal with plenty of vegetables, meat, and fresh fruit etc. Waxing I have some of the menus and some of the dietetic analysis of the food value of the meals. We had a cook, assistant cook, cleaner, two part time recreation leaders, at the School Centre and I cannot remember the staffing at the other two sections of the Centre, except that for the first time the creche employed well qaulified staff a not at the kindergarten (then opene all day) employed a number of women who were called "child care reworkers." The younger children were kreatranks cared for at the c and the children aged from about 12x 3½ were cared for a t the kingarten. The hall used for school meals, the school where we had a chool activities and the day nursery and creche were located fair close to each other and the three sections had a joint committee and numerous xxxxxxx joint social functions.

Jany person.

One of my responsibilities was to organise the voluntary helpers for the three sections of the Centre. At least seven women helped every day with the school meals. A number of organisations in Brunswic accpeted responsiblity for rostering the centre in one particular day a mwmexxx week, Thus II you are interested in what women did during the war tou can find out from some of my documents how women hrlped in a voluntary capcaity to set up such services as the Brunswic Children's Centre. We had young women, middle aged women and elderly Government Heeded Campaign of he Conte

Government Heeded Campaign

By the beginning of 1943 the Federal Government had heeded the campaig fo child care and about ten of the half day kindergartens were extended to full day care.

The wartime powers by which the Federal Government was able to fund such services were not able to continue after the war because of t e loss of the I944 referendum. Thus k when the war finished in ky. x I945 the wartime nurseries only continued for a few more months wefore funding was with drawn. Te referendum was lost in 1944 but the Government was able to continue until the war ended.

Where Did the Brunswick Women Work

I have some records of where the mothers worked. Some made parachutes at Holefroof (they made tilk stockings before the war), others worke at Milkers Rope Factory making ropes for the ships and for the air force etc; others were clothing trade workers. We did not have any children whose mothers worked in the actual munitions factory as it was a fair way away from Brunswick. The women who were employed at the S hool Section of the Brunswick Children's Centre all had children of their own and accepting a job as a cook, play -leader etc was quite a big step for them as they did not expect to become employed when they were mothers.

How the War Affected My Libing Conditions.

There was a greatt housing shortage during the war and in order to accept the appointment at B runswick we had to shift to some place in Brunswick. It was very difficult indeed to find any sort of accommodation, but eventually we did find a very small flat which became our home for the next fourteen years. So my children went to school in Frunswick and Brunswick and Coburg became our home areas.

A I stated earlier my husband was working in the munitions factory at Footscray and he could have a very nourishing meak every day (a three course meal for /1/4. The children had their main meals at Children's Centre and so did I. Thus there was no need for me to spend a great deal of time on home cooking.

We did not saffer through habing to use coupons for food and clothing. The rationing was quite 0.K. for us.

Through the children's centres at South Yarra and Bunswick I was able to meet and work with many different types of women and made some last lasting friends, Through being able to work, at first as a voluntary helpers, and later as a pinion worker, I was not ted in the home.

The women who were employed and who were voluntary at the Centre also enjoyed kkinnakkingkingkingking the south later and panishick I was able to make the contract of the home.

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