Women's Work: An Organisational Study of the Union of Australian Women, 1950-1970

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Acknowledgement of Country

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which this work was undertaken, the Wuddawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung people, the Ngunnawal people and the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong people of the Kulin Nation, and recognise their continuing connection to the land and waterways. I pay my respects to Elders past and present and acknowledge the ways in which the people of these lands have shared knowledge through oral tradition for generations.

Doctor of Philosophy Declaration

"I, Katherine Keirs, declare that the PhD thesis entitled 'Women's Work: An Organisational Study of the Union of Australian Women, 1950-1970' is no more than 80,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work".

"I have conducted my research in alignment with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and Victoria University's Higher Degree by Research Policy and Procedures."

Signature: 

Dated: 14 December 2021

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this thesis contains the names and stories of Aboriginal men and women now passed.

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Abstract

The UAW was a women's advocacy organisation founded by the Communist Party of Australia in 1950. This thesis explores the UAW's contribution to the lives of women through an examination of its activities between 1950-1970. The UAW's commitment to socialism and the working class is considered within the socio-political context of the Menzies era. It argues that the UAW harboured dual motivations in undertaking campaigns around the cost of living, women's status, peace, industrial relations, and community enhancements. While the UAW aimed to improve the lives of women and children in working class communities and promote a more equitable society, it did so with the explicit intention of politicising its rank-and-file membership and those women with whom its members associated. Although the Women's Liberation Movement superseded the UAW in the 1970s, the thesis demonstrates that the UAW contributed to the momentum of women's rights in the 1960s.

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List of Abbreviations

AAL	Aboriginal Advancement League
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
ALP	Australian Labor Party
AEU	Amalgamated Engineering Union
AICD	Association for International Cooperation and Disarmament
ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand and United States (Pacific Security Treaty)
APC	Australian Peace Council
ASIO	Australian Security Intelligence Organisation
BWIU	Building Workers Industrial Union
CPA	Communist Party of Australia
CWA	Country Women's Association
DLP	Democratic Labor Party
FCAA	Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IWD	International Women's Day
NCWA	National Council of Women Australia
NHA	New Housewives Association
RSL	Returned Services League
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation
SOS	Save Our Sons
UAW	Union of Australian Women
UN	United Nations Organisation
WAC	Women's Action Committee
WEL	Women's Electoral Lobby

WIDF	Women's International Democratic Federation
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WLM	Women's Liberation Movement
WWF	Waterside Workers Federation
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

Introduction

Women's organisations of the 1950s and early 1960s were beset by the widespread societal perception that women were less suited for public life and civic inclusion than men. The labour shortage resulting from men's absence during World War II had briefly ignited hopes for a more equal status for women.[1] However, following the return of Australian men after the war, the image of Rosie the Riveter, a cheerful and empowered woman working to aid the war effort, gave way to that of the 1950s suburban housewife – a woman who took pride in maintaining a home, caring for her children and catering to the needs of her hard-working husband. The cultural embrace of the nuclear family with a bread winning father at its head and a mother managing the home in a supportive role was reflected in the spaces deemed acceptable for women in Australian society. From the positions available for women in the workforce to the areas pursued by women's organisations, women were commonly perceived as primarily nurturers and subordinates and little else prior to the emergence of Second Wave Feminism.

In the first half of the twentieth century, autonomous women's rights activism was predominantly the realm of middle-class feminists, who worked through organisations like the Australian National Council of Women, the Australian Federation of Women Voters, the United Associations of Women and many others.[2] These organisations held various political views but invariably accepted the necessity of patient lobbying in order to achieve the smallest progression of women's status prior to and during the Menzies era (1950-1966). Labour activists were vocal and effective during the Great Depression of the 1930s and at the outbreak of war – Muriel Heagney's leadership within the Council of Action for Equal Pay made a 'significant contribution' to increased payrates for women workers during the early years of World War II.[3] In 1943, middle and working-class women's organisations came together during the inaugural Women's Charter conference, in order to build on the momentum of women's active citizenship fostered throughout the war years.[4] However, by the end of the 1940s the 'good behaviour' required of women workers in aid of the national 'war effort', followed immediately by an increasingly fraught political climate served to diminish the voices of working-class women in the public arena. A rare exception to the class hegemony within mid-century women's

[1] Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1999), 10
[2] Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal*, 10.
[3] Beverly Symons, 'Muriel Heagney and the fight for equal pay during World War II', *The Hummer* 3/1 (1998-1999): 1-13 at 6.
[4] Joy Damousi, *Women Come Rally* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), 153-154.

activism, and the subject of this thesis, was the Union of Australian Women (UAW) – a women's organisation formed in 1950, with a membership base drawn from the working class and a leadership heavily composed of women cadres from the Communist Party of Australia (CPA).

Investigating the UAW's drive to politicise women and stir a working-class consciousness in housewives engaged in domestic and factory work is a key research aim of this thesis. The era immediately preceding the emergence of Second Wave Feminism is remembered for its social conservatism, rigid gender roles and the deep political divisions between 'left' and 'right', exacerbated by the Cold War. Following a rise in popularity during World War II, the Communist Party had been damaged by its role in the coal strike of 1949 and the increasing tensions between the Soviet bloc and the West.[5] Eager to broaden its membership base and counter the perceived conservatism of women voters, the Party reassessed its engagement with women following its observation of communist women's organisations in western Europe.[6] Within this historical context, the central aim of this thesis is to determine the ways, through activity in the UAW, in which working class women advocated for their own interests and for those of their class and gender. The thesis will further develop an analysis of the UAW's contribution to women's inclusion within the labour movement, within Australian public life and as citizens of an increasingly connected world.

Mid-century women's activism was informed by maternalist philosophy, whereby a woman's right to participate in civic society was based upon her primary role of raising the next generation of citizens and more esoterically, upon the idea that she was a mother to all and a nurturer of society.[7] The concept of men and women's equality during the early and mid-twentieth century was then comparative or complementary, rather than equivalent. Damousi has argued that women within the CPA eschewed the idea of sexual difference in favour of framing women as less politically developed than men. This is consistent with UAW rhetoric; however, as Damousi also points out, women comrades were expected to agitate around issues suited to a 'maternal' and 'familial' role.[8] Though the UAW advocated for the role of wife and mother to be given equal consideration within economic and political discourse, it too remained committed to the idea of women as innately concerned with the welfare of children and the management of a household. In later years, this traditional view of women would alienate a younger generation of women's rights activists from their counterparts in the UAW, but during the 1950s and early 1960s the UAW's efforts to elevate the status of the housewife and redefine her role in society was innovative and even subversive.

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[5] Phillip Deery, 'Chifley, the Army and the 1949 Coal Strike', *Labour History*, 68, (1995), 80-97 at 93.
[6] Suzanne Fabian and Morag Loh, *Left Wing Ladies. The Union of Australian Women in Victoria, 1950-1998* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 2000), 18.
[7] Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal,* 72; Zora Simic, 'Butter not Bombs. A Short History of the Union of Australian Women', *History Australia*, 4/1 (2007), 07.1-07.15 at 07.5.
[8] Joy Damousi, *Women Come Rally*, 143.

The Old Left's preoccupation with the politically active, male worker left little room for women to develop a working-class consciousness solely relevant to the domestic sphere.[9] Pioneering women involved in socialist activism earlier in the twentieth century certainly championed an improved position for women in society.[10] However, it was during the Menzies era that the UAW framed the unique experience of ordinary working class women and their children as playing a significant role in forming a class based critique of the political and economic structures governing Australia and the world.[11] Zora Simic has described the UAW's 'tendency to position politics as the natural result of [the] everyday experiences' of Australian women, particularly mothers.[12] Perhaps the most notable deviation from earlier socialist-based efforts of and on behalf of women, is the UAW's unapologetic prioritising of working-class housewives' perspective on public political issues.[13] The UAW also eschewed the idea that women were suited for auxiliary tasks over direct political action.

The administrative and procedural work undertaken by UAW members on an almost exclusively voluntary basis, exhibited a professionalism and gravitas indicative of the largely untapped abilities of women at this time. Within the UAW, women performed both the routine domestic work and the political work required to keep the organisation active and relevant – a departure from previously established gender-based labour divisions within socialist organisations.[14] Though the UAW is one part of a larger tradition of women and socialists in Australian history, its emergence during the Cold War and its isolation as a radical women's organisation required it to change the narrative of how ordinary working class women approached activism.[15] Initially, the needs of working women and domestically engaged housewives were acknowledged by the UAW as overlapping but distinct. However, as married women's workforce participation increased throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the needs of housewives and the needs of working women began to merge, informing the UAW's advocacy of issues like childcare and the availability of part-time work.

The UAW's focus on engaging women in the workforce with political action underscores the tenuous relationship between left-wing political activism and women's status prior to the emergence of Second Wave Feminism. Working class women activists either took a supportive role and assisted their 'menfolk', thus embracing a helpmate status, or less frequently they ventured into industry,

[9] The Old Left is a term describing political and labour activists influenced by Marxist philosophy prior to the development of the more radical New Left in the 1960s.
[10] Damousi, *Women Come Rally*, 1.
[11] 'Make Canberra's deeds fit Australia's needs', *Our Women*, October-December 1961, p. 10, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW, Victoria University (VU) Special Collections.
[12] Simic, 'Butter not Bombs', 07.6.
[13] See for example: 'A woman's view of the common market', *Our Women*, September-December 1962, p. 26, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW, VU Special Collections.
[14] Damousi, *Women Come Rally,* 36.
[15] Damousi, *Women Come Rally,* 151-152.

where they faced an 'uphill battle' to make their voices count.[16] The UAW looked favourably on both forms of working class activism for women, and aimed to make the latter option achievable for greater numbers.[17] More significantly, however, the UAW's broad scope ultimately normalised the working class housewife as a political actor in her own right. According to Simic, 'The UAW was determined to represent the interests of both working class mothers and workers, but it was the image of the political housewife which would come to define them.'[18] Though the symbolism of the 'housewife' lost political currency within women's activism following the rise of the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM), the UAW's preliminary efforts in what would come to be known as 'consciousness raising' potentially impacted a demographic not typically comfortable with radical feminism: married, working class women.

Four main areas of analysis will be pursued within this thesis, each forming its own chapter. Although efforts have been made to include the records of UAW state branches across Australia, this thesis will more heavily draw from material pertaining to the National, Victorian and NSW branches, due to the larger membership numbers within the latter two states and the greater degree of primary source material available. The demographics of the UAW will be established early, confirming that the UAW was populated by working class housewives, largely married and politically left leaning. The leadership of the UAW skewed heavily communist, with prominent CPA and UAW members like Freda Brown, Gloria Garton and Noreen Hewett active in pursuing the CPA's agenda within the UAW. This dynamic will be examined as it related to the UAW's autonomy and its sweeping agenda to politicise women in order to unite the working class in the cause of socialism. The anti-communist political climate undermined the UAW's message within the mainstream media. However, the UAW's representation of trade unionists' wives helped provide it with a more receptive audience within the rank and file of the Australian Labor Party (ALP), following the split between progressive and conservative factions in 1955. The interplay of class, gender and politics provides the impetus for the first central theme of the thesis.

Following the establishment of the UAW's organisational agenda and overall place within the Australian political landscape, the thesis will audit the UAW's attempts to infiltrate the trade union movement on behalf of women. This work was centred around three distinct areas: trade union women's organisations, industrial sites and through UAW and trade union publications, particularly on the subject of wage equality. The thesis will undertake a thorough analysis of the UAW's drive to foster gender inclusivity within industry and the labour movement. Although frustrated by attitudes about gender roles from both sexes, the UAW's early efforts in promoting women's inclusion within

[16] This is reflected within the Communist Party policy for women, c. early 1960s, Item 11/4 1976:0028, Box 3, CPA Victoria State Committee, University of Melbourne Archives (UMA).
[17] For example, the UAW included a branch of 'wharfie's wives' and maintained close ties to women's auxiliary branches of trade unions.
[18] Simic, 'Butter not Bombs', 07.1.

trade unions likely helped set the preconditions for the later integration of women into the workforce and labour movement, following further campaigning by the WLM and lobbying by the Women's Electoral Lobby, alongside the continuing efforts of progressive unionists.

The third major theme explored will be the UAW's drive towards internationalism. The UAW maintained links to international socialism and the worldwide progressive women's movement. The UAW was affiliated to the international organisation, the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF). Whilst providing direction to the UAW and offering connections to the broader community of socialist women, the work of the WIDF was not universally prioritised by UAW members. The non-communist rank and file membership in particular sought solutions to local problems, and according to some former members, viewed internationally focused campaigns as a distraction. The thesis will consider these tensions, before discussing the role played by the UAW in connecting Australian women with global issues.

Internationalism as a concept played a major role within the UAW's politicisation of Australian working-class women throughout its campaigns – both domestically and internationally. Anti-racism, multi-culturalism, support for national independence movements and of course peace and disarmament were all issues taken up by the UAW. The pursuit of land and citizenship rights for Indigenous Australians was connected to the struggle for the rights of racial minorities and Indigenous communities globally. The conduct of war and international conflict was linked to the moral wellbeing of Australian children and the economic pitfalls of defence spending within the Federal budget. The UAW's internationalist outlook challenged ordinary housewives to broaden their perspective and engage with issues far outside of the scope of domesticity and the responsibility for children, while firmly emphasising the indirect ramifications of global issues on Australian families.

Finally, the thesis will discuss the UAW's response to the end of the Menzies era and the rapid increase in women's rights activism in the late 1960s. This section will examine the UAW's displacement from the vanguard of the women's movement as social forces and demographic factors undermined the organisation's efforts to broaden its membership base. However, the UAW's foundational efforts to give ordinary women a public voice in the conservative Menzies era will be identified as contributing to the rise of Second Wave Feminism in Australia, despite the UAW's resistance to the 'feminist' label. The issues chosen by the UAW were influenced by maternalism and socialism. These ideological underpinnings resulted in a focus on economic issues affecting families, peace between nations and issues of morality, particularly concerning children. The UAW's activism was progressive for a time, but the organisation was largely caught off guard when presented with causes taken up by radical feminists in the late 1960s, like abortion and domestic violence. The emergence of Second Wave Feminism and the rise of the WLM built upon and superseded the work

of the UAW, but also left some older, working-class women with the perception that their previous efforts were undervalued and unrecognised.

Through the examination of the UAW as an organisation representing working-class women under communist influence, its efforts to include women in the labour movement, its links to the international movement of socialist women and its relationship to Second Wave Feminists during the latter period, this thesis will demonstrate that the UAW was an important organisation in the gradual politicisation of Australian working-class women during the 1950s and 1960s. Although the radical WLM certainly propelled women's rights forward at an unprecedented rate, this thesis will demonstrate that during the Menzies era it was the UAW which painstakingly fostered receptivity to gender equality in the communities in which it was active.

Chapter One

Literature Review

As a historical subject, the Union of Australian Women (UAW) is located between the historiographies of the Cold War and the rise of Australian feminism. Zora Simic argues that this placement has served to diminish the UAW's significance within the narrative of Australian women's history.[1] This thesis will argue that the UAW's exclusion from this dominant narrative does not accurately reflect its important contribution to women's political development in Australia. Simic's analysis demonstrates the ways in which the anti-communist political environment undercut the UAW's capacity for popular appeal during the 1950s. The scope of its contribution was further stifled during the 1970s by the development of the Women's Liberation Movement, which became the catalyst for a revised political history.[2] The relationship between the 'Old' and 'New Left' is identified by Simic as a marginalising factor in the historical representation of the UAW. This historiographical deficiency presents an opportunity to re-examine the ways in which working class women dealt with gendered issues prior to the 1970s and to redefine the UAW's place in the history of the Australian women's and labour movement. Through a discussion of the existing literature, this section will demonstrate that the role of the UAW in women's advocacy has not yet been fully explored by historians or activists.

Histories examining the UAW and its communist origins from the perspectives and recollections of UAW members include Fabian and Loh's *Left Wing Ladies* and Curthoys and McDonald's *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade*.[3] The Cold War binary, examined by Barbara Curthoys in the first half of *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade*, exemplifies the difficulties experienced by the UAW in its promotion of a presumed socialist agenda. This 'agenda' refers to issues as seemingly innocuous as peace, which was viewed at the time as a potential communist conspiracy.[4] Simic draws on this analysis to demonstrate how the politics of the 1950s often undermined the UAW's efforts.[5] Curthoys explains the metamorphosis of the New Housewives Association (the communist-affiliated predecessor of the UAW) into the UAW as an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to shed the perception of left wing radicalism, and appeal to a more mainstream demographic.[6] The legacy of communist

[1] Simic, 'Butter not Bombs', 07.1.
[2] Simic, 'Butter not Bombs', 07.2.
[3] Suzanne Fabian and Morag Loh, *Left Wing Ladies. The Union of Australian Women in Victoria, 1950-1998* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 2000); Barbara Curthoys and Audrey McDonald, *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade: The Story of the Union of Australian Women* (Sydney: Bookpress, 1996).
[4] Phillip Deery, 'War on Peace: Menzies, the Cold War and the 1953 Convention on War and Peace', *Australian Historical Studies,* 122 (2003), 248-269.
[5] Simic, 'Butter not Bombs', 07.5.
[6] Curthoys and McDonald, *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade,* 7.

association, however, was not so easily discarded. Jody Ellis' 1980 honours thesis describes UAW interviewees as unwilling to be named even then due to the continuing sting of anti-communist stigma, three decades on.[7]

Curthoys, a long-time member of the Newcastle branch of the UAW maintains that there was no explicit socialist agenda driving the organisation, despite its ongoing concern with working class issues and connections to the Communist Party of Australia (CPA).[8] Curthoys' and McDonald's status as prominent UAW leaders and long-time communists, imbues their historical interpretation of the UAW with valuable firsthand insights, but also requires the reader to remain aware of potential biases and subjectivity within their history of the UAW. Fabian and Loh, drawing from both oral history interpretations and primary source documents, and with a central focus on the history of the Victorian branch of the UAW, acknowledge communist influence, but present anecdotal evidence implying that the UAW was obliged only to follow Communist Party policies on international matters. Other historians have similarly drawn from oral history records to assess the relationship between the UAW and CPA.

Lisa Milner's biography on Freda Brown refers to the close relationship between the Communist Party and the UAW but suggests that the latter organisation 'was not a communist organisation, or a "front"'.[9] Milner's conclusion is based upon the perspective of the women who ran the UAW, although recognises that other Party members did indeed view the UAW as a front organisation.[10] Tom and Audrey McDonald's autobiography *Intimate Union* provides valuable insight into the ways in which the CPA and the UAW were linked through overlapping membership, trade union activities and, to a significant extent, ideology.[11] Introduced to the UAW through a fellow CPA member, Audrey McDonald's first-hand perspective demonstrates the close ties between these organisations.[12] Further, Barbara Curthoys' daughter, historian Ann Curthoys, describes her mother's activism within the UAW as sitting within a 'communist framework of theory and activity'.[13] In lieu of an official socialist agenda driving the UAW, it might instead be inferred that the overarching theme of class solidarity played a significant role in informing its advocacy of women.

However, other authors such as Marylin Lake and Joy Damousi have rejected any ambiguity around the UAW's adherence to socialist ideology and loyalty to the CPA, as have Simic and Tom

[7] Jodi Ellis, 'The Union of Australian Women: 1950-1980', Honours Diss., La Trobe University, 1980, 9.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Lisa Milner, *Swimming Against the Tide. A Biography of Freda Brown,* (Adelaide: Ginninderra Press, 2017), 71.
[10] Milner, *Swimming Against the Tide,* 70.
[11] Tom McDonald and Audrey McDonald, *Intimate Union. Sharing a Revolutionary Life* (Annandale: Pluto Press, 1998).
[12] McDonald and McDonald, *Intimate Union,* 48.
[13] Ann Curthoys, *For and Against Feminism. A Personal Journey into Feminist Theory and History*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988), 63.

O'Lincoln. Lake describes the UAW as 'a revamped version of the left-wing New Housewives Association, which had operated as a sort of women's auxiliary to the Communist Party'.[14] Damousi writes: 'Women of all political persuasions were encouraged to join [the UAW], but the energy and direction derived from the Party'.[15] Simic's analysis considers both the UAW's links to the CPA, 'formal and otherwise', and the societal perception of this connection, as having the same effect – ensuring that the organisation was populated by members who were at least, sympathetic to socialist causes in a hostile political climate.[16] O'Lincoln asserts that 'at the top levels, the CPA set the tone' within the UAW.[17] These studies present the connection between the UAW and a broad, if undefined socialist agenda, as self-evident. Although scholars and former UAW members are united in acknowledging a relationship between the UAW and CPA, there is a spectrum of views on the extent of Communist Party direction within the UAW. The nature of CPA influence within the UAW will be conclusively addressed within the first chapter of the thesis.

Although the literature on the UAW considers, to varying extents, the relationship between the UAW and the CPA, women are conspicuously absent from scholarly studies of the CPA by Davidson, Gollan, and O'Lincoln, although O'Lincoln does fleetingly mention the UAW in a list of Communist front organisations and later redressed his oversight in a chapter on the UAW in *Rebel Women*.[18] The absence of women from Communist Party history is decisively addressed in Damousi's *Women Come Rally.* She includes an analysis of the 'masculinist' character of the Communist Party from the 1920s to the 1950s and describes women's activism within the CPA and associated organisations as being seen as subordinate to that of male members.[19] Damousi's treatment of women in the Australian socialist movement includes the experiences of women active within the CPA and UAW, providing a uniquely gendered perspective to this area of historical enquiry traditionally populated by male actors. The biographical and auto-biographical accounts of UAW members play a significant role in understanding the nuanced interaction between class and gender activism during the early Cold War and beyond.

The thesis will consider the individual contributions of influential women within the UAW. Lisa Milner's biographical article and her subsequent biography of Freda Brown demonstrate the scope of issues important to the UAW leadership. Identified as a founding member and president of the

[14] Lake, *Getting Equal,* 210.
[15] Damousi, *Women Come Rally,* 152.
[16] Simic, 'Butter not Bombs', 07.5.
[17] Tom O'Lincoln, 'Against the Stream: Women and the Left, 1945-1968' in *Rebel Women in Australian Working Class History*, eds. Sandra Bloodworth and Tom O'Lincoln (Melbourne: Interventions, 1998), 88-100 at 95.
[18] Alistair Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia: A Short History* (Stanford: Hoover University Press, 1969), 104; Robin Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists: Communism and the Australian Labour Movement 1920-1955* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1975); Tom O'Lincoln, *Into the Mainstream: The Decline of Australian Communism* (Sydney: Stained Wattle Press, 1985).
[19] Joy Damousi, *Women Come Rally* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), 43.

National Executive of the UAW from 1963 to 1973, Brown's activism on behalf of women overlapped with her advocacy for peace, communism and racial equality.[20] This intersection of left-wing causes was also a feature of the organisation. The UAW collaborated with Aboriginal women for racial equality, regularly demonstrated for peace and supported the implementation of socially progressive policies, which would benefit the working class.[21] Brown's advocacy for peace was consistent through her work within the CPA and the Women's International Democratic Federation, of which she was President from 1975-1989.[22] The biographical accounts of women associated with the UAW provide individual perspectives to this analysis. Although this thesis will appraise the organisation as a whole, the importance of the individual contributions of its members will also be examined.

Freda Brown stands out as an exemplary representative of the UAW, both in her success as a women's advocate and through her embodiment of so many of the pluralities of the UAW. Brown, along with McDonald, stand as individual examples not only of UAW connections to socialism through their affiliation with the CPA, but also within their personal motivations and aspirations for participating in public life, described in these respective biographical and autobiographical accounts. Entries on Zelda D'Aprano and Betty Olle in Lofthouse's *Who's Who of Australian women* further contribute to the inclusion of individual achievements of UAW members. Betty Olle was a long serving UAW member, became Victorian Secretary in 1967, and worked for the Australian Peace Council in the early 1950s. D'Aprano let her membership lapse soon after joining the UAW to pursue a more radical feminism, gaining prominence in that movement in the late 1960s.[23] D'Aprano's own autobiography entirely bypasses her time in the UAW, reflecting D'Aprano's disillusionment with the Communist Party's approach to women's activism following her direct involvement in a bitter dispute at the meatworkers' Trade Union Clinic in 1971, and her engagement with the WLM.[24] D'Aprano's biography of trade unionist and equal pay campaigner, Kath Williams, acknowledges Williams' UAW membership, while emphasising her individual role in the promotion of wage equality.[25]

200 Australian Women includes a detailed entry on Roma Gilchrist, a feminist and peace activist who held office within the Perth branch of the UAW for many years, and fought tirelessly for peace,

[20] Lisa Milner, "'A key person internationally": Towards a biography of Freda Brown', *Lillith: A Feminist History Journal*, 22 (2016), 21-36 at 32.
[21] Fabian and Loh, *Left-Wing Ladies,* 42; Tom O'Lincoln, 'Against the Stream', 87-100 at 94-95.
[22] Milner, 'A key person internationally', 33.
[23] Andrea Lofthouse, *Who's Who of Australian Women,* (North Ryde: Methuen Australia, 1982), 343; 136.
[24] Felicity Bartak with Phillip Deery, *A Unique Endeavour: A History of the Western Region Health Center, 1964-2004* (Melbourne: WRHC, 2004), 61-71; Zelda D'Aprano, *Zelda: The Becoming of a Woman,* (Melbourne: Widescope International Publishers, 1978).
[25] Zelda D'Aprano, *Kath Williams. The Unions and the Fight for Equal Pay,* (North Melbourne: Spinifex, 2001).

Aboriginal and women's rights.[26] Again, the narrative of these women showcases the interwoven threads of women's advocacy, but also the diversity of personalities and approaches populating the UAW. *The Changemakers,* a similar collection of influential Australian women, is notable for its lack of reference to the UAW.[27] This is despite including frequent collaborator and, according to the Australian Women's Register, UAW member, Oodgeroo Noonuccal (formerly known as Kath Walker).[28] Noonuccal's lasting contribution to public life was as a poet and activist for Aboriginal rights, among numerous other achievements. She was an executive member of the Aboriginal Advancement League, with which the UAW worked closely.[29] The unqualified advocacy of Aboriginal women and workers during the 1950s and 1960s, a period characterised by abysmal race relations, demonstrated the UAW's commitment to social equality, and its identity as a progressive organisation for all women.[30] This thesis will explore the role of socialism and class solidarity in shaping this inclusive philosophy, at a time when the majority of white Australians were indifferent, at best, to the marginalisation of Indigenous Australians.[31] Sitting alongside racial equality as a primary cause of action for members of the UAW, and indeed the organisation as a whole, was the issue of peace.

The UAW, and the wider women's movement within Australia, followed a strong international tradition of supporting world peace.[32] This is demonstrated by O'Lincoln's account of the monthly peace marches undertaken by the UAW throughout the 1950s; he credits the organisation with stubborn determination in the face of attempted repression by authorities.[33] According to O'Lincoln the UAW was the most radical group advocating working-class women's rights during the 1950s and early 1960s.[34] This synopsis of the UAW's contribution to political life in Australia provides a useful analysis of the relationship between the UAW and the peace movement. O'Lincoln connects this relationship to the CPA, an organisation which, he concludes, played a leading role in UAW direction.[35] Amirah Inglis, who was not a UAW member, but a devoted and affirmed communist, recalls the simultaneous calls for class war and world peace within the revolutionary circles in which

[26] Michal Bosworth, 'Roma Gilchrist', in *200 Australian Women. A Redress Anthology,* ed. Heather Radi (Broadway: Women's Redress Press Inc., 2007), 225.
[27] Susan Fabian and Morag Loh, *The Changemakers: 10 Significant Australian Women*, (Milton: The Jacana Press, 1983).
[28] Clare Land, *Oodgeroo Noonuccal*, The Australian Women's Register, http://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/IMP0082b htm.
[29] Fabian and Loh, *The Changemakers,* 46.
[30] Fabian and Loh, *Left-Wing Ladies,* 42.
[31] Stuart Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia,* 3rd edn., (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 227-229.
[32] O'Lincoln, 'Against the Stream', 94; Marian Sawer and Marian Simms, *A Woman's Place: Women and Politics in Australia,* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1993), 168.
[33] O'Lincoln, 'Against the Stream', 97.
[34] Ibid., 96.
[35] Ibid., 95-97.

she moved.[36] This dichotomous position fanned the flames of distrust among those suspicious of the CPA's support for world peace.

Within the literature on the UAW, however, the issue of peace is consistently represented as a genuine concern of left leaning women, despite anti-communist rhetoric that characterised peace activism as a communist conspiracy.[37] The UAW worked closely with peace organisations, predominantly the Australian Peace Council (APC), led by (among others) Alfred Dickie, the husband of UAW activist and APC organiser Alison Dickie.[38] Barbara Carter describes the APC and its affiliates as being synonymous with the Australian peace movement during the 1950s.[39]

Despite these intimate connections and active participation, the UAW does not figure prominently within the history of the Australian peace movement.[40] Perhaps this is because, its persistent efforts notwithstanding, the UAW did not manage to mobilise significant support during its peace marches. Writing for *Quadrant,* Max Teichmann dismisses Cold War era peace activists on the 'left', including the nebulously phrased 'women's groups' as fronting for a communist agenda. In this way, Teichmann denies that they were 'real' peace advocates at all.[41] This perspective assumes that socialist views and the desire for peace were mutually exclusive. However binding the ties between the UAW and the CPA were, it can hardly be said that the former organisation had any direct connection to a revolutionary agenda, but rather strove within the system to achieve its specific goals. The UAW's focus on peace will be discussed within the thesis as it related to the international movement of socialist women, advocated by communist members like Freda Brown. Despite the failure of the UAW's peace marches to garner enthusiasm, the organisation was successful in other related areas. In 1968, for example, the UAW won the withdrawal of war toys from major retailers on a tide of popular support – the culmination of a campaign started in 1965.[42]

Fabian and Loh's history, like Curthoys and McDonald's, takes a substantially positive view of the UAW's activism in the 1950s and 1960s. Both Ellis's 'The Union of Australian Women' and *Left-Wing Ladies* are general histories of the Victorian Branch of the UAW. The inclusion of successful local campaign outcomes highlights the importance of examining the grassroots nature of women's

[36] Amirah Inglis, *The Hammer and Sickle and the Washing Up: Memories of an Australian Women Communist*, (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1995), 27.
[37] Ibid., 105.
[38] Fabian and Loh, *Left Wing Ladies,* 9,31.
[39] Barbara Carter, 'The peace movement in the 1950s', in *Better Dead than Red. Australia's First Cold War: 1945-1959 Vol II,* eds. Ann Curthoys and John Merritt, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986), 59.
[40] See Malcolm Saunders and Ralph Summy, *The Australian Peace Movement: A Short History*, (Canberra: Australian National University, 1986); Barbara Carter, 'The peace movement in the 1950s', in *Better Dead than Red. Australia's First Cold War: 1945-1959 Vol II,* eds. Ann Curthoys and John Merritt, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986).
[41] Max Teichmann, 'The cut lunch commandos', *Quadrant Magazine*, 52/4 (2008), 72-74 at 74.
[42] Fabian and Loh, *Left-Wing Ladies,* 64-65.

activism in the immediate post-war period which this thesis will explore.[43] In *The Childcare Issue*, O'Toole argues that the UAW's work on the provision of accessible childcare was pivotal in building momentum for its eventual success in the 1970s.[44] These works offer a useful counterpoint to Simic's discussion of the limitations and roadblocks to the UAW's activism, both contemporaneously and historically.[45] Simic concludes her 'short history' of the UAW by acknowledging that in spite of its rich history, the UAW was never 'able to transcend its Cold War origins'.[46] Ellis rejects the notion of evaluating the UAW's history as either successful or otherwise, citing the importance of understanding women's history in its cultural context.[47] These perspectives suggest the importance of a critical evaluation of the UAW at a variety of organisational levels.

The UAW's early association with the CPA certainly courted scrutiny from the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) and condemnation from some quarters of the mainstream political system.[48] However, both published histories of the UAW illuminate the extent to which the organisation was met with respect and treated as an authority on matters affecting working class women.[49] Damousi describes the organisation as both 'a leading women's organisation during the 1950s' and '…a lone [female] voice in the reactionary climate of the Cold War'.[50] The social, political and organisational complexities of the UAW's ideological identity are shown by these accounts to be both myriad and overlapping. From the national body's sometimes contentious preoccupation with internationalism to the local UAW sewing circles and folk dancing groups – looked upon with derision by some CPA women – the role of socialist politics and class solidarity within the UAW is ripe for further investigation.

Whilst Simic's focused article deals explicitly with the UAW's historical marginalisation, first by the Cold War, and again by the rise of Women's Liberation, Marilyn Lake's *Getting Equal* describes the latter phenomenon more generally.[51] Lake posits that the proponents of Second Wave Feminism gave minimal acknowledgement to the gains made by their foremothers who engaged in a more 'polite' form of activism. [52] In this way the underrepresentation of the UAW within the historical narrative can apply to all active feminist organisations prior to the paradigm shift of the 1970s. Marian Quartly and Judith Smart's *Respectable Radicals* exemplifies this form of women's activism through their

[43] Ibid., 41.
[44] Kevin O'Toole, 'The Union of Australian Women: The Childcare Issue', *Labour History*, 75 (1998), 144-154.
[45] Fabian and Loh, *Left Wing Ladies,* 46.
[46] Simic, 'Butter not Bombs', 07.13.
[47] Ellis, 'The Union of Australian Women', 7.
[48] Curthoys and McDonald, *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade,* 30-31.
[49] Curthoys and McDonald, *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade,* 19; Fabian and Loh, *Left Wing Ladies,* 37.
[50] Damousi, *Women Come Rally,* 18; 25.
[51] Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal. The History of Australian Feminism* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1999).
[52] Lake, *Getting Equal,* 7.

examination of the National Council of Women Australia (NCWA).[53] In addition to Lake's history, Quartly and Smart provide a comprehensive description of the UAW's contemporaries, which will be useful in the construction of a comparative history. The politically conservative NCWA was loathe to affiliate with organisations on its 'Pink List' for fear of socialist infiltration.[54] However, this did not prevent collaboration with the UAW through a legal challenge regarding equal pay in 1969.[55] This unlikely collaboration exemplifies the unifying cause of feminism across the political spectrum. This often-fragile solidarity amongst women during a time of systemic inequality further demonstrates the UAW's ability to accrue allies based upon common experience. However, the thesis will also argue that common ground was often difficult to find across the class divide.

If anti-communism served to alienate the UAW from its conservative contemporaries in the Australian women's movement, progressive internationalism assisted the organisation in accruing allies. Goodall, Randerson and Ghosh's *Teacher for Justice: Lucy Woodcock's Transnational Life*, details the achievements of prominent activist, Lucy Woodcock.[56] Woodcock became the President of the United Associations of Women (UA) in the 1960s and collaborated with the UAW throughout her later career. Although not associated with the CPA, the UA's progressivism and connection to the WIDF resulted in the pursuit of similar goals to the UAW and the strengthening of the working relationship which had existed between organisations from the early 1950s. Other academic works which contextualise the UAW's place within the international women's movement, include Francisca De Haan's essays on the WIDF and Katharine McGregor's collected works on the Indonesian WIDF affiliate, Gerwani.[57] The UAW's relationship to the WIDF and sister organisations like Gerwani, played a significant role in informing UAW policy throughout the Menzies era and beyond. Chapters Four and Five of this thesis will explore the international connections forged by the UAW, and discuss the ways in which these connections strengthened the UAW's autonomy when its alliance with the CPA wavered with the rise of radical feminism and the New Left in the late 1960s.

Although the socialist origins of the UAW prohibited it from identifying as feminist, an analysis of its contribution would not be possible without examining the gendered nature of its activism.[58] Whilst Simic acknowledges the complex dynamic between socialism and feminism, she suggests that the

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[53] Marian Quartly and Judith Smart, *Respectable Radicals. A History of the National Council of Women of Australia 1896-2006* (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2015).
[54] Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals,* 344.
[55] Ibid.*,* 305.
[56] Heather Goodall, Helen Randerson and Devleena Ghosh, *Teacher for Justice: Lucy Woodcock's Transnational Life* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2019).
[57] Francisca De Haan, 'The Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF): History, main agenda and contributions', *Women and Social Movements (WASI) Online Archive,* eds. Thomas Dublin and Kathryn Kish Sklar*,* (2012); Katharine McGregor, 'Indonesian Women, the Women's International Democratic Federation and the Struggle for "Women's Rights", 1946-1965', *Indonesia and the Malay World,* 40/17 (2012), 193-208.
[58] Fabian and Loh, *Left Wing Ladies,* 98; Simic, 'Butter not Bombs', 07.5.

UAW can be retrospectively described as both.[59] Lake's history of Australian feminism includes the UAW in a section on working class women's activism.[60] Damousi deals explicitly with this ideological dichotomy, revealing the often vitriolic reactions of socialist women to 'bourgeois feminism'. However, socialist women's organisations that tended towards reformism, as opposed to industrial agitation and revolutionary socialism, are identified as holding common goals within both feminism and socialism.[61] The UAW is given brief acknowledgement in Sawyer's 'Reclaiming Social Liberalism'; it is identified as communist in origin, but nonetheless as having collaborated effectively with 'feminist' government agencies.[62] Evan Smith identifies UAW activists as instrumental in the rise of Second Wave Feminism in Australia, pointing out the organisation's uniquely radical presence in the years prior to the paradigm shift within the women's movement and the involvement of individual UAW members in the formation of the Women's Liberation Movement.[63] Smith's tantalisingly brief assessment of the UAW's foundational importance to the emergence of radical feminism in the late 1960s will be developed in Chapter Five of the thesis.

Simic, Lake, and Quartly and Smart identify the period prior to the 1970s as dominated by maternalism; that a woman's role as 'mother' was the basis for a louder voice in society and was common to both feminism and communism.[64] According to Simic, this was a defining characteristic of the UAW, and was a factor in its successful collaboration with women's groups from a variety of ideological backgrounds.[65] Simic and Lake provide a critical understanding of the UAW's place within the Australian feminist landscape, as it existed in the 1950s and 1960s. It is the intersection of this form of 'maternal' feminism and socialism which provides part of the impetus for further research. As noted above, the political climate of the 1950s produced a range of challenges for the communist-associated UAW.[66] One of its first campaigns was focused, not on women's status or world peace as described in its mission statement, but on civil liberties and democratic freedoms.[67] The formation of the UAW coincided with the attempt by the Menzies government to ban the CPA and any 'front' organisation through the 1951 Referendum (Powers to Deal with Communists and Communism).

[59] Simic, 'Butter not Bombs', 07.2.
[60] Lake, *Getting Equal,* 212.
[61] Damousi, *Women Come Rally,* 87.
[62] Marian Sawyer, 'Reclaiming Social Liberalism: Women and the State', in *Women and the State,* ed. Renate Howe (Melbourne: La Trobe University Press, 1993), 1-21 at 5.
[63] Evan Smith, 'When the Personal Became too Political: ASIO and the Monitoring of the Women's Liberation Movement', *Australian Feminist Studies,* 33/95, (2018), 45-60 at 48.
[64]Lake, *Getting Equal,* 72; Simic, 'Butter not Bombs', 07.5.
[65] Simic, 'Butter not Bombs', 07.3.
[66] Simic, 'Butter not Bombs', 07.5.
[67] 'Union of Australian Women', *Guardian,* 4 August 1950.

Although John Murphy's *Imagining the Fifties* makes no reference to the UAW, his discussion of Australian society during the Menzies era provides a relevant analysis of the social and political culture affecting women in both professional and private life.[68] Directly relevant to the UAW's involvement in the 'no' campaign during the 1951 referendum is Damousi's 'Women! Keep Australia Free'.[69] Her analysis of the UAW's contribution to the campaign (which ultimately succeeded in defeating the proposed reintroduction of the anti-communist legislation) illustrates both the UAW's ties to socialism and its influence with working class women in the early 1950s.[70] This article contextualises the UAW's socialist identity and fraught beginnings within the context of virulent anticommunism, whilst simultaneously demonstrating the advantages of class solidarity in mobilising support. The UAW's close ties to women's auxiliary unions, outlined by Georgina Murray and David Peetz in *Women of the Coal Rushes*, suggests the importance of fostering such relationships in a hostile political environment.[71] This is confirmed by Curthoys, who recalls affiliation with other women's organisations – and in particular those within the trade union movement – as a UAW priority.[72] Murray and Peetz identify the UAW as an important resource in the politicisation of women associated with the coalmining industry in the period under examination, and beyond.[73] This thesis develops that argument by examining the UAW's role in nurturing women's participation within the broader union movement. This form of activity has the potential to shed new light on the UAW's influence within the Australian labour movement.

In the Australian context, communism found its power base within the trade union movement.[74] While it is important to emphasise that the UAW was officially autonomous from the CPA, the Party's influence in UAW direction is clear.[75] The UAW's working class identity and focus on workplace issues necessitated a close collaborative relationship with communist-led unions.[76] This political dimension within the trade union movement is a crucial component in this study's analysis of how socialism informed and affected the activism of the UAW. Ann Curthoys' chapter (in Caine, Grosz and de Lepervanche) details the struggle between the left and right factions of the trade union movement in the 1950s.[77] Tom Bramble's *Trade Unions in Australia* describes the dynamic between the CPA and the ALP during the early years of the Cold War and provides a broad political

[68] John Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties: Private Sentiment and Political Culture in Menzies Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2000), 44.
[69] Joy Damousi, '"Women – Keep Australia Free!": Women Voters and Activists in the 1951 Referendum Campaign', *Australian Historical Studies,* 44/1 (2013), 89-104.
[70] Damousi, 'Women – Keep Australia Free!', 96.
[71] Georgina Murray and David Peetz, *Women of the Coal Rushes* (Sydney: University of NSW Press, 2010), 94.
[72] Curthoys and McDonald, *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade,* 20.
[73] Murray and Peetz, *Women of the Coal Rushes,* 289.
[74] Greg Patmore, *Australian Labour History* (Sydney: Longman Cheshire, 1991), 93.
[75] Damousi, *Women Come Rally,* 152.
[76] Fabian and Loh, *Left Wing Ladies,* 36; Lake, *Getting Equal,* 210.
[77] Ann Curthoys, 'Equal Pay, Family Wage or Both?', in *Crossing Boundaries. Feminism and the Critique of Knowledges,* eds. Barbara Caine, E. A. Grosz and Marie de Lepervanche (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988), 133.

framework from which the thesis will draw. [78] Greg Patmore's *Australian Labour History* provides important background material, particularly its detailed chapter on the historiography of feminist labour. [79]

The interaction between gender and workplace relations will be a central concern of this thesis. Literature on women's labour history does not include a significant body of work on the UAW. Miriam Dixon's *The Real Matilda* offers a brief analysis of women's place within the male dominated trade union movement. She contemplates whether the comparatively powerful and influential position of Australian unions has helped, or hindered, women in the workforce.[80] This is a pertinent point when considering the role of class solidarity versus competitive hostilities within the fight for equal pay at the expense of the male family wage. Curthoys delineates the various positions on equal pay during the 1950s. The communist led unions advocated equal pay for women, whilst retaining support for the family wage. This was in direct opposition to the right-wing of the union movement, which merely upheld the status quo. Women's groups such as the NCWA and the United Associations of Women supported equal pay for women through the abolishment of the 'family wage'.[81] Tellingly, the UAW's position coincided with that of the CPA and left-wing of the trade union movement.[82] Here, again, we see the role of class solidarity within the UAW's advocacy of women.

Official support for the equal pay campaign from the ACTU came in the early 1960s. Marian Aveling and Joy Damousi's collection of historical documents pertaining to working women contains pamphlets stating the case for equal pay, from 1962.[83] This collection excludes entirely the UAW and pays only scant attention to the period 1950-1970, which is presumably due to the broad time span – 1787-1980 – of the collection. Nevertheless, the scope of this collection effectively conveys the long struggle for equality fought by women in Australia. Edna Ryan and Helen Prendergast offer a chapter on women in Australian unions in Katherine Cole's *Power, Conflict and Control in Australian Trade Unions*, again without reference to the UAW. [84] Elizabeth Windschuttle's *Women, Class and History* includes the individual experiences of socialist women active in labour politics. Windschuttle relates the experiences of women who held membership to both the UAW and the CPA but focuses

[78] Tom Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia. A History from Flood to Ebb Tide* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 20.
[79] Greg Patmore, *Australian Labour History* (Sydney: Longman Cheshire, 1991),161-183.
[80] Miriam Dixson, *The Real Matilda. Woman and Identity in Australia 1788 to 1975* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1976), 37.
[81] Curthoys, 'Equal Pay, Family Wage or Both?', 134.
[82] Fabian and Loh, *Left Wing Ladies,* 39.
[83] Marian Aveling and Joy Damousi, *Stepping out of History. Documents of Women at Work in Australia* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991), 158.
[84] Edna Ryan and Helen Prendergast, 'Unions are for Women too!', in *Power, Conflict and Control in Australian Trade Unions,* ed. Katherine Cole (Melbourne: Penguin, 1982), 261-278.

predominantly on the latter organisation.[85] Indeed, while some of these works on Australia's labour history include reference to the UAW, most are fleeting and provide little analysis.

Humphrey McQueen has asserted that, under the banner of 'social action', the existence of a working-class manifests only through the 'continuing experience of real, living men'.[86] McQueen's use of masculine language in his characterisation of the Australian working class emphasises a problem with traditional class categorisation and gender. Stuart Macintyre judges this to be a problem of narrow definition whereby wage labour, to the exclusion of domestic labour, defines who is working class.[87] Conversely, Eisenstein identifies the 'housewife' (an unpaid domestic worker across all but the most elite economic classes) as the female manifestation of capitalist exploitation – the subordinate counterpart to the male proletariat.[88] Of course, declaring all 'housewives' as potential revolutionaries, regardless of their level of economic privilege is disingenuous. This argument does, however, convey the double burden of working-class women: oppressed twice over for their sex and class, and subsequently erased from the struggle (when factoring in Macintyre's argument). Simic's observation that the UAW framed its political talking points through the mundane experiences of the working-class housewife redresses the exclusion of women's experience from defining working class social action. [89] It is the experience of 'real living' women that informed the agenda of the UAW, both personally and politically.

The omission of the UAW from much of the literature concerning women's labour history confirms Simic's assertion that the UAW has been sidelined in history. The predominantly oral history perspectives contained in *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade* and *Left Wing Ladies* provide an invaluable understanding of the challenges and achievements faced by the UAW during its first two decades of activism. However, this research will extend beyond these histories through its focus on the organisational apparatus and inherent working-class character of the UAW in its role as women's advocate. It will use this framework to examine the UAW's alliances with political parties, other women's organisations and the trade union movement. When considering the importance of the UAW's contribution, it would be a mistake to equate directly attributable results with historical significance. This is because the UAW did not campaign through direct action alone. In particular, the relationships forged with working class women and the communities in which they lived, worked and raised their children, indicates the influence of the UAW in fostering political engagement within both

[85] Mavis Robertson, 'Sally Bowen: Political and Social Experiences of a Working-Class Woman', in *Women, Class and History. Feminist Perspectives on Australia 1788-1978,* ed. Elizabeth Windschuttle (Melbourne: The Dominion Press, 1980), 405-422
[86] Humphrey McQueen, 'Labourism and Socialism', in *The Australian New Left: Critical Essays and Strategy,* ed. Richard Gordon, (Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1970), 44.
[87] Stuart Macintyre, *The Labour Experiment,* (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1989), 5.
[88] Zillah Eisenstein, 'Developing a theory of Capitalist Patriarchy', *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism,* Eisenstein, Z., ed., (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), 30.
[89] Simic, 'Butter not Bombs', 07.6.

the labour movement and domestic suburbia. It is these relationships that characterise the UAW as a staunchly working-class organisation, which employed class and gender solidarity as a means to advance the status of women.

Chapter Two

Class Politics, Gendered Perspective: Ideology, Identity and Internal Perceptions of the UAW

Sing a song of sixpence, whichever shall I choose?
My hubby needs new trousers, the children want new shoes.
If the old man has his trousers, and the children get their shoes,
There'll be nothing left for tucker! Whichever shall I choose?[1]

Introduction

This chapter will explore the interaction between class, gender and politics, which defined the UAW's activism. These essential features of the organisation will be examined within the cultural context of post-war, pre-Women's Liberation Australia. The woman as 'housewife' is the embodiment of this era's feminine expression, making the UAW both conventional in representing the status quo and exceptional in expanding its limitations, invigorating women's contribution to leftist economic and social activism.[2] The housewife's place within the masculinist, industrially based Australian labour movement was, prior to the emergence of UAW predecessor the New Housewives Association (NHA), peripheral at best.[3] From the NHA and its radical political action focused on living standards and peace, the UAW emerged as a voice for left leaning housewives which broadened and centred their concerns.

The reinvention of the NHA into the UAW was at least in part due to the perception that an effective women's mass movement must include working members.[4] Even as the NHA and UAW respectively created a space for 'housewives' to contribute their experience to the public political realm, these organisations sought to make way for, and legitimise the work of the few women who occupied the traditionally masculine space within factories and on shop floors.[5] The desire to assist women in the workforce to become politicised members of the labour movement however, created a dichotomy between what the UAW was and what it aspired to be. The UAW's contrasting motivations to serve

[1] 'Nonsense rhymes – or are they?' *Our Women*, 10th Anniversary 1963, p. 9, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW, Victoria University Special Collections.
[2] Zora Simic, 'Butter not Bombs. A Short History of the Union of Australian Women', *History Australia*, 4/1 (2007), 07.1-07.15 at 07.2; Joy Damousi, *Women Come Rally* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), 180.
[3] Damousi, *Women Come Rally,* 143.
[4] Suzanne Fabian and Morag Loh, *Left Wing Ladies. The Union of Australian Women in Victoria, 1950-1998* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 2000), 18; Barbara Curthoys and Audrey McDonald, *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade: The Story of the Union of Australian Women* (Sydney: Bookpress, 1996), 47.
[5] 'Build the Union of Australian Women', c. 1951, p. 1, 1.8 Reports/papers; statements/policies; submissions; resolutions, UAW, VU Special Collections.

its domestically engaged membership base and the goal it harboured for recruiting working women were merged to form a working-class consciousness experienced through domestic responsibility and feminine solidarity.

This chapter will first examine the demographic makeup of the UAW and discuss how the role of 'housewife' characterised and informed the UAW's political activism. The nature and manifestation of the UAW's class identity will be addressed, with a focus on those factors which came to define the organisation as working class. The marriage of class and gender within the conduct of UAW activism produced a unique perspective on issues pertinent to wage workers and their families. This perspective emphasised the sometimes indirect, but no less affecting consequences of economic and industrial conditions to women and children. The chapter will further examine the presentation of the UAW's political and economic viewpoint within working class women's networks, with attention to its publication *Our Women.* The journal provides insight into the strategies used by the UAW to promote political thought among working class housewives. The UAW made persistent attempts to broaden its network of interlocutors through the sale of *Our Women*, courting groups like new migrants. The UAW included migrant women in its economic analysis and activism, periodically directing attention to the recruitment and engagement of women within migrant hostels. This dimension will also be addressed within the chapter.

Following this discussion, the chapter will examine the UAW's campaign for improved social services, which formed the basis of an economic analysis which centred women and children. The UAW's push for local infrastructure and amenities will be examined in the context of the UAW's broader campaign of politicisation. The pairing of local issues with broad political talking points was a strategy used by the UAW to put women at ease who may otherwise have been intimidated by political discussion. Similarly, the UAW's call for increased maternity allowance and child endowment was popularly received by women, on which the UAW capitalised to criticise the Menzies government's economic priorities and the system of capitalism itself. This discussion will lead into an examination of the UAW's adherence to socialism during the anti-communist Menzies era and an analysis of the UAW's relationship to the Communist Party of Australia (CPA).

During the Menzies era, characterised by conservative social constraints and the political division of the Cold War, class-based politics were tied to ideological allegiances. The UAW's reluctance to explicitly claim its ideological foundations during the 1950s and 1960s hints at its drive towards becoming a 'mass movement' in the anti-communist political climate of the Cold War. The UAW's political inclination towards reformist socialism was a less radical approach than the revolutionary socialism advocated by the CPA. Nevertheless, the chapter will demonstrate that CPA cadres within the UAW held 'fraction meetings' to implement action favourable to Communist Party policy. A core goal of the UAW cadres was to engender a class consciousness in working class women. The UAW's

strategies to inculcate politically uneducated housewives into socialist based activism will be discussed in the chapter. The UAW's pairing of traditionally feminine or mundane activities with political discussion was a deliberate and effective strategy of education. Further, the UAW's focus on the cost of living allowed the organisation to offer a socialist critique to working class women while engaging with issues pertinent to the running of a household, long considered women's work.

The breadth of UAW activism included to varying degrees, the denouncement of the Menzies government and its 'anti-working class' policies. The sustained enmity between the Menzies government and left-wing organisations was the catalyst for occasional UAW collaboration with and support for the Australian Labor Party (ALP), contrary to its 'non-party political' programme. The UAW's role in campaigning against the Menzies government during the 1961 Federal election emphasised the precarious position of socialists at this time, who largely agreed with ALP policy but with whom the ALP was unable to form close ties due to the continued stigma of communism. In the final section of this chapter, the UAW's place within mainstream Australian politics will be discussed, as it related to class politics and attitudes of the major parties towards issues of gender relations.

The 'political housewife'

Unlike their feminist successors, the women of the UAW did not rail against gender roles and the men who benefited from them. The tenets of socialism instructed that their emancipation would be earned through the defeat, or at least reform, of capitalism.[6] This world view coloured the UAW's activism in sometimes convoluted ways. In the early 1960s the organisation took issue with the high cost and low quality of nylon stockings, required to be worn at work through social convention. While later generations of radical women might have simply stopped wearing the stockings and encouraged others to do the same, the UAW set about petitioning for a lower price, expending resources and energy to change the economics of nylons instead of challenging the dominant norms.[7]

As the 1950s ended and radical social change of the 1960s was fermenting, the UAW's programme remained remarkably consistent. Cost of living, peace, women's rights at work and equal pay, profiteering of large monopolies, more funding for education, health and social services, children's welfare, industrial relations policy and moral standards within the Australian media and popular culture dominated UAW discourse for twenty years.[8] The staunchly conservative and anti-communist Menzies government, which held power until 1966, was unsympathetic to UAW demands, which for the most part, remained unmet. Perhaps the overarching cultural legacy of the Menzies era within

[6] Communist Party Policy for Women, c. early 1960s, p. 3, Item 11/4 1976:0028, Box 3, CPA Victoria State Committee, UMA.
[7] Curthoys and McDonald, *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade,* 87.
[8] 'Build the Union of Australian Women', c. 1951, pp. 1-3, 1.8 Reports/papers, UAW Records, VU Special Collections; Annual Report, UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1966, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

popular historical narrative is social conservatism, with 'family values' as its main feature.[9] The symbolic representation of this cultural trend has become 'the 1950s housewife'. As Simic has pointed out, the UAW embraced this conventional image whilst subverting its symbolism.[10] The material reality of the 1950s housewife in Australia did not always resemble the image presented in the media. Many struggled without adequate services or even, at times, basic necessities.

While the majority of women during the 1950s performed unpaid labour within the home,[11] their exclusion from full-time employment does not negate their contribution to a 'working class' identity. On the contrary, the experience of women prior to the emergence of Women's Liberation fostered an intimate understanding of exploitation, through the experience of domestic drudgery at home and low pay when they did venture into the workforce.[12] Demographically the UAW was representative of wider Australia, in that its members were largely engaged in unpaid domestic labour. However, this does not preclude the possibility that a substantial number of these women may have engaged in piece work in or outside the home. As Maria Nugent has reported, 'Outworking has long been a source of income for working-class women with home-based responsibilities, such as childcare.'[13] This form of 'women's work' is described within the report as forming a 'hidden economy', a characterisation which speaks to the lack of official documentation recording these activities. A UAW survey, conducted in the mid-1950s, found that 'a majority of women, irrespective of family commitments, earn some money, either outside or by "home-work", as one wage is no longer sufficient for all needs.'[14]

As the UAW attempted to consolidate its position as a mass organisation of women within the labour movement, its drive to include working women intensified.[15] This push came at the same time as women's employment rates were steadily climbing. While the UAW did not keep systematic records of its members and their employment status, these inferences can be drawn from a number of sources. In 1961, the UAW Executive Committee tentatively estimated the overall membership at 1900. When divided into state branches, West Australia claimed 20 out of its 138 members, or 14%, were working (full and part-time) and Queensland that 40 out of 350 (11%) worked. South Australia's 50-60 person

[9] Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties,* 2.
[10] Simic, 'Butter not Bombs', 07.10.
[11] Women comprised 19% of the workforce in the 1954 Census, and married women accounted for only 34% of that figure: Commonwealth Bureau of Statistics 1954, 'Australia, Occupational Status of Females: Numbers and Percentage Distribution, 30th of June, 1954', <http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/53CA34F80DCE5242CA25787200217DFB/$File/1954%20Census%20-%20Volume%20VIII%20-%20Part%20IV%20Statisticians%20Report.pdf>.
[12] Damousi, *Women Come Rally,* 147.
[13] Maria Nugent, 'Women's Employment and Professionalism in Australia. Histories, Themes and Places', *The Australian Heritage Commission*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2002, 13.
[14] Press statement of the UAW (NSW), c. 1957, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[15] 'Build the Union of Australian Women', c. 1951, p. 2, 1.8 Reports/papers, UAW Records, VU Special Collections; 'Draft plan for membership drive', 1962, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, VU Special Collections.

membership did not include a 'big percentage working', and Tasmania's membership of 22 was not connected to employment status at all. Whilst Victoria claimed 400 individual members, no specific figure was given; suffice to say that 'more and more working members' were becoming involved. Similarly, New South Wales (NSW) with the highest membership total of 800, only specified that Sydney groups included a 'large number of women who worked'.[16]

Previous reports of membership numbers were similarly imprecise. Although it has been consistently reported that the UAW experienced a period of growth after the previously state-based organisation formed a central national body in 1956, in-house reporting from the period acknowledged only those members who had paid their annual membership dues to the UAW by the time of reporting.[17] Figures for NSW from 1957-1958 suggest 695 'financial' members, 400 of whom were only 'partially' active. It was estimated that about one quarter of the latter figure were working (14% overall), and the remainder cited family commitments as the reason for sporadic participation in the organisation. Other states reported on their numbers for this period, with varied specificity, but no further details of members' employment status were forthcoming.[18] Although these figures are incomplete, the existing data suggests a lower percentage of working women within the UAW than amongst the Australian general public during the late 1950s and into the 1960s. The Australian Bureau of Statistics records women's employment for 1961 at 34% of the population.[19] This discrepancy may have been due to a number of factors, however the possibility that the UAW was populated by a higher-than-average number of married women, who were statistically less likely to be working, is a strong possibility.

ASIO made a concerted effort to document the details of UAW members and their spouses. Its main source of demographic information was the electoral roll. With the exception of a nurse, a clerical worker in a union office and a singing teacher, the women recorded were married, with occupation marked 'housewife' and 'home' or 'domestic duties'.[20] Spouse occupations recorded in these files are varied, but overall indicate the prevalence of 'blue collar' occupations, such as fitter, taxi driver, farmer, plumber, refrigerator repair man and builder's labourer.[21] If these UAW members worked part-time jobs to supplement the family income, it was not recorded on the electoral roll, or by ASIO. Defining women as adjuncts to their spouses is reductive by contemporary standards, but in an

[16] Executive Report for National Committee Meeting, 17 February 1961, p. 5, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[17] NAA: A6122/44, 1448, Report on UAW, p. 1, c. 1960; Lisa Milner, 'A Key Person Internationally: Towards a Biography of Freda Brown', *Lilith: A Feminist History Journal,* 22, (2016), 21-36 at 31; Minutes of National Executive Committee UAW, 27 April 1958, p. 6, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[18] Minutes of National Executive Committee UAW, 27 April 1958, p. 6, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[19] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011, *Fifty Years of Labour Force Statistics Now and Then*, cat. No. 6105.0 <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features30Dec+2011#1960s>
[20] NAA: A6122/16, 1174, Report on the First National Conference of the UAW, 13 November 1956.
[21] NAA: A6122/45, 1624, Report, Evelyn Burn electoral records, 21 October 1964; NAA: A6122/45, 1620, Electoral particulars for UAW members and spouses, 1961.

economic sense, it is a historic reality. The systemic limitations on women's earning capacity prior to the 1972 Conciliation and Arbitration Commission's granting of equal pay precluded most women from financial independence.[22] Indeed, this was the primary motivation for a significant portion of the UAW's activism on behalf of working-class women. 'A wharfie's wife speaks: "We stand by our husbands"', is the title of an article from the UAW publication *Our Women.* The article explicitly politicises the domestic experience, whilst demonstrating the inevitability of women's reliance on their husband's relationship to industry.[23] This article demonstrates, from a woman's point of view, McQueen's assertion that the 'continuing experience of real, living men' defines the working class, by providing a fist hand account of life under the family wage system.[24] It also begs the question of whether working class women activists were an auxiliary force within the labour movement, or a legitimate branch of equal importance. This question, applied specifically to the UAW, will be addressed in Chapter Three.

Our Women declared in 1961 that 'Most of the members of the Union of Australian Women are mothers. Some of them work, in professions, business or factories. All are housewives.'[25] During a speech to the inaugural meeting of the UAW in NSW, the speaker warned against disregarding 'the basic needs of a man and his family'.[26] The self-descriptive language employed by UAW publications and internal communiques is indicative of the organisation's deference to the 'housewife', the mother and the partnered woman. By addressing the 'working housewife', the UAW invoked a sense of solidarity between its members, through the shared experience of domestic responsibility.[27] The assertion that all UAW members were housewives, regardless of their employment status, bonded these women in service to the family wage model, which relied on women's unpaid domestic labour to function effectively. In spite of the commonalities between employed and unemployed housewives emphasised by the UAW, the organisation perceived in wage earning women the potential to form a militant, industrial wing of the women's movement indicative of its communist origins. The UAW's attempts to reconcile these positions were often effective, but occasionally contradictory.

The UAW both promoted the universality of 'women's work' and created space to discuss the differing effects of issues on those who worked outside the home. A 1953 resolution denouncing the suspension of quarterly adjustments to the basic wage addressed 'both housewives and women who

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[22] Nugent, 'Women's Employment and Professionalism in Australia', 41.
[23] 'A wharfie's wife speaks: "We stand by our husbands"', *Our Women*, Sept-Dec 1963, p. 15, 4.1.1 *Our Women*, UAW, VU Special Collections.
[24] Humphrey McQueen, 'Labourism and Socialism' in *The Australian New Left: Critical Essays and Strategy,* ed. Richard Gordon, (Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1970), 44.
[25] '1960 was a good year for the UAW', *Our Women,* March-May 1961, p. 27, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW, VU Special Collections.
[26] 'Speech delivered to our inaugural conference', c. 1950, p. 1, z236, Box 130, Noel Butlin Archives Centre (NBAC), Australia National University (ANU).
[27] Annual Report, UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1966, p. 3, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

work'.[28] 'Housewives and working women' was a common phrase which was both inclusive and acknowledged the different capacity for social action between demographics.[29] Women's devotion to their romantic partners and children was also invoked in order to spur social action. In 1950 the UAW appealed for 'mothers and sweethearts' to declare against the Korean War and in 1951 it asked, in relation to war expenditure, 'what then remains to clothe and nourish the school child, the housewife, the working man?'.[30] The organisation's language, and notably its use of the term 'housewife', remained consistent until the mid-1960s.[31] However, during the latter half of the decade, UAW publications referred more often to 'women', 'our members' or contextual terms like 'shoppers' and 'mothers' when discussing consumer issues or those effecting children. This subtle change marks the shift in popular discourse around women's societal role in the late 1960s, which will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Oral history records suggest the average UAW member saw herself first as a wife and mother and was defined by society as such. Although the *Guardian* invited all women to join the UAW when it was formed in Victoria – including housewives, mothers, single and working women – members' recollections contradict the idea of the UAW as including a broad cross-section of women.[32] Phrases describing the membership invariably framed women in relation to their family and domestic commitments: '..[W]ives of communists'[33]; 'mostly trade unionists' wives'[34]; women who 'mostly didn't work'[35]; 'young mothers with children'[36]. This acceptance, and even encouragement, of rigid gender roles would eventually be the subject of criticism by the WLM, beginning in the late 1960s and discussed further in Chapter Five.[37] However, during the socially conservative era which preceded the Second Wave, the idea of 'housewives' asserting their political rights and demanding change was considered subversive by some. In 1951, the *Guardian* reported on the response of an independent political candidate, Mr C. Kennedy, to the UAW's election survey: 'the UAW would do better to stay at home, look after your husbands and families and leave the affairs of state to men.'[38]

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[28] Resolutions of the Annual Conference of the UAW (NSW), 1953, p. 1, z236, Box 130, NBAC, ANU.
[29] Union of Australian Women (Qld) Annual Meeting – 3rd Session 30 October 1959, p. 5, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[30] UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1950, p. 2, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections; Secretary Report, First Annual Conference, November 1951, p. 4, 1.8 Reports/papers; statements/policies; submissions; resolutions, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[31] UAW Newsletter (Vic), December 1965, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[32] 'Union of Australian Women', *Guardian,* 4 August 1950, 6.
[33] Edith Morgan interview with Jodi Ellis, 9 July 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings of members' stories, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[34] Marj Lambert interview with Suzanne Fabian, 16 February 1995, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[35] Hilda Smith interview with Jodi Ellis, 14 August 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[36] Betty Oke interview with Jodi Ellis, 12 February 1985, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[37] Curthoys and McDonald, *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade,* 103.
[38] 'Stone Age Man Tells Woman: "Get Back to the Kitchen!"', *Guardian,* 26 April 1951, 6.

For its part, the *Guardian* mockingly referred to Mr Kennedy as hailing from the 'Stone Age'. While UAW members may have embraced the role of housewife, they did not accept that this role limited their right to express opinions or to contribute to public debate.

UAW membership and the 'double shift' of the working woman

The UAW's formative mandate to include working women involved uniting women on issues of industrial relations.[39] The 1960 National Conference included a session for 'working women and trade union wives.'[40] This effort to address both housewives with industry connections and women workers simultaneously represented both the UAW's reality and aspirations. Victorian member Betty Oke expressed the difficulties of recruiting working women, who were time and energy poor, due to the 'double-shift' of paid employment and domestic responsibilities.[41] In a 1961 report on working women, UAW member Gwen George lamented:

> Unfortunately we're still a long way from full equality in Australia and so have to recognise all the difficulties in trying to organise working women. 40 hours a week, 8 hours a day on production line, plus shopping and getting the dinner ready don't leave women feeling as fresh as a daisy and ready to dash out to a UAW or union meeting.[42]

A key goal of a six-month membership drive in 1962 was to 'build existing working women's groups or to establish new ones.'[43] This was to be achieved through a concerted effort at recruiting women via trade union offices. However, the following year, UAW National Committee member and Waterside Workers Federation (WWF) Women's Committee representative, Rita Jamieson, urged the UAW to strengthen bonds with women in industry.[44] This opinion was the expression of frustration at an unrealised goal. The National Secretary during 1961, Pat Elphinston, characterised the recruitment and activation of working women in the UAW as 'a most pressing problem', and as the linchpin of the organisation's continued existence.[45]

In stark contradiction to the idea that the UAW would gain strength and vitality through a working membership, the increasing numbers of women entering the workforce during the latter period may have negatively affected its output. By 1966, the Victorian branch described reduced activity within

[39] The Constitution of the Union of Australian Women (Vic), 9 September 1950, 1.1 Programme, constitution and aims, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[40] Minutes of National Administrative Meeting, 21 March 1960, p. 1, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[41] Betty Oke interview with Jodi Ellis, 12 February 1985, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[42] Report on National Committee Meeting, 18 February 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[43] 'Draft plan for membership drive', 1962, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[44] NAA: A6122/45, 1623, report, 'Victoria Rita Jamieson' 4 December 1963.
[45] Executive Report for National Committee Meeting, 17 February 1961, p. 4, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

its ranks due to the increasing number of working members as a 'severe' loss.[46] It seems the dual role of 'housewife' and 'worker' was never quite reconciled with that of 'activist' within the UAW. In 1969, foundation member Ella Schroder remarked critically on the UAW's preoccupation with attracting working women: 'We have a tendency to keep saying we want certain things in the organisation without considering the effect this can have on our present membership.'[47] Despite the UAW's persistent concern over its inability to attract and retain women from industry within its ranks, the organisation did succeed in giving a political voice to women who worked in the home. This uniquely gendered position within the presentation of class-oriented activism fundamentally differentiates the UAW from its masculinist contemporaries in the labour movement. Here was a working-class consciousness formed through economic struggle, largely experienced within the domestic sphere.

Still, agitation for equal pay and treatment of women in the workforce was an early priority for the organisation. UAW state branches from the early 1950s included in their aims: 'To encourage women, particularly women workers, to strive for equal pay, strict price control and support trade union demands for higher living standards.'[48] Contrary to the masculinist conception of the politically active worker, left-wing women activists were, prior to changing social expectations in the 1970s, more effective when they were not engaged in full-time work. Whilst the UAW's most active members did not work full time, they displayed a commitment to solidarity with working women.

The UAW claimed that women politicised by membership of the organisation prior to engaging in work, had a carry-on effect in the political awakening of their female colleagues.[49] This point is significant in considering the UAW's legacy within the women's and labour movement. Members of working women's groups within the UAW discussed their rights at work, sharing experiences and disseminating knowledge through the UAW newsletter.[50] These groups circulated petitions and made sure trade union offices received the 'Working Woman' news sheet.[51] Specific instances of members using their UAW education to assert their rights at work indicate the broader reach of this knowledge within individual workplaces, which will be further explored in Chapter Three.[52]

A working class base

[46] Annual Report, UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1966, p. 3, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[47] Ella Schroder, cited in Curthoys and McDonald, *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade,* 102.
[48] The Constitution of the Union of Australian Women, 1.1 Programmes, constitution and aims, UAW Records, VU Special Collections; Constitution of the Union of Australian Women (NSW), 1952, z236, Box 130, NBAC, ANU.
[49] NAA: A122/45, 1620, 'UAW Annual Report, Victoria 1961-62', 15 March 1962, p. 7.
[50] UAW Newsletter (Vic), November 1964, p. 6, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[51] UAW News (Qld), August 1966, p. 3, z326, Box 1, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[52] UAW Newsletter (Vic), May 1965, p. 2, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

UAW membership, according to the organisation's charter, was open to all women.[53] The UAW's focus on 'economic justice' through its efforts toward increased child endowment, equal pay, higher wages, price control and subsidised childcare, among others, championed working class women in particular, but also appealed to sections of the middle class.[54] The UAW's political inclination, though rarely explicitly stated, was couched in a vague language of socialism. 'We say that there is enough wealth in Australia to provide every family with adequate food, shelter, employment and medical care', the Victorian branch declared in 1962, whilst decrying conservative Premier Bolte's commitment to business over people.[55] Similarly, in reference to state politicians receiving increased pay, the Queensland UAW demanded: 'What about the pensioners and the families on little over the basic wage?'[56] A UAW questionnaire for politicians during the 1963 State election campaign in Victoria, reveals the issues deemed important by the Executive. These included increases to social services payments and education funding. Equal pay for women, peace and housing availability were also top priorities.[57] The Queensland UAW echoed many of these talking points in response to the 1965 Federal budget, which it dubbed the 'guns before butter budget'. In particular, the Queensland members decried the lack of attention to social services for widows and old-age pensioners.[58]

The UAW championed mild socialism through the advocacy of social welfare and economic safeguards for the most vulnerable members of society. Spanning its first two decades, the UAW advocated for families in danger of eviction during the 1951 'housing crisis', the unemployed and their dependants, children with disabilities, migrant populations, old-age pensioners, Aboriginal Australians and particularly Aboriginal women, working women on significantly less pay than their male counterparts and working mothers with children of all ages.[59] The organisation's stance on economic issues, such as the abolition of a 20 per cent hire purchase charge, directly referenced 'workers' as the victims of discriminatory economic policy. [60] Despite this clear focus on 'economic justice' and social welfare programs, the official, public literature of the UAW rarely used the term 'socialism' in reference to its policies or economic philosophy. The organisation did use the term

[53] The Constitution of the Union of Australian Women, 9 September 1950, 1.1 Programmes, constitution and aims, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[54] For example, all of these issues are referenced in UAW Newsletter (Vic), November 1964, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[55] NAA: A6122/45, 1620, 'UAW Annual Report, Victoria 1961-62', 15 March 1962, p. 3.
[56] UAW News (Qld), June 1965, p. 2, z236, Box 1, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[57] NAA: A6122/45, 1623, Report, Election Questions 1963, 3 February 1964.
[58] UAW News (Qld), June 1965, p. 3, z236, Box 1, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[59] See for example: 'Items for speakers at Annual Conference', [document], c.1955, pp. 1-2, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU; 'Build the Union of Australian Women', c. 1951, p. 2, 1.8 Reports/papers, UAW Records, VU Special Collections; Report on Child Endowment, 1959, 5.4 Child Endowment, UAW Records, VU Special Collections; Resolutions of the Annual General Meeting of the UAW (Qld), 1 November 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections; UAW Newsletter (Vic), June 1969, p. 8, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[60] UAW Annual Meeting (Qld) – 3rd Session, 30 October 1959, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

'working class' in reference to its members – although the phrase 'the working people' was more common and 'working-class housewives' was often attributed to the UAW within the communist press.[61] While one of the explicit aims of the UAW was to include women across classes, the reality was different with a clear focus on working class women within the UAW.[62] Nevertheless, overtures to women of all classes are echoed throughout the UAW's self-descriptive literature and communist publications, with the ultimate leveller for women identified as world peace for the security of the family.[63]

This search for a universal appeal was calculated. The organisation, and indeed the CPA, conceived of the UAW as a mainstream women's organisation with a broad membership. From the UAW's inception in 1950, the communist press reiterated that its 'aims would appeal to all women.'[64] This is a point well established by previous chroniclers of the UAW.[65] The recollections of prominent members are varied in their perceptions of CPA influence in formulating the UAW's public image, which will be discussed below.[66] Nevertheless, these women invariably characterised the organisation as working class and left-wing. The UAW aimed to 'unite women for the recognition of their rights as mothers, workers and citizens', as well as 'to seek cooperation and assistance of the Trade Unions and individuals in the furtherance of our mutual aims'.[67] From the above guidelines, it can be inferred that class identity and political affiliation were – theoretically – less important than the more pragmatic concern of potential members supporting the UAW's working-class programme and implicit socialist aims. However, those most likely to agitate for the working class were those who had the most to gain from doing so. When discussing ways of assisting women in the workforce, the UAW urged local groups to 'liaise with women in the factories.'[68] In 1963, Hilda Smith declared the overall purpose of the UAW was to support the working class, particularly women.[69]

The limited data on individuals aligned to the UAW makes it difficult to definitively prove a majority working class membership; however, there are indications that this was probably the case. The UAW often alluded to its working-class base:

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[61] Resolutions adopted at the annual meeting, 1-4 November 1961, p. 3, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections; 'Not for us, thank you, Mrs Downing', *Guardian,* 6 October 1950, 6.
[62] Secretary's report, First Annual Conference, 8 November 1951, p. 1, 1.8 Reports/papers, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[63] The Constitution of the Union of Australian Women, 9 September 1950, 1.1 Programmes, constitution and aims, UAW Records, VU Special Collections; 'Women's Union joins fight for peace, liberty', *Guardian,* 15 September 1950, 8.
[64] *Guardian,* 'Union of Australian Women', 4 August 1950, 6.
[65] Fabian and Loh, *Left wing ladies*, 20-22; Curthoys and McDonald, *More than a hat and glove brigade,* 6-7.
[66] See for example: 6.4.6 Cassette recordings of members' stories, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[67] NAA: A6122/45, 1620, UAW Annual Report, Victoria 1961-62, 15 March 1962.
[68] 'Build the Union of Australian Women', c. 1951, p. 2, 1.8 Reports/papers, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[69] NAA: A6122/45, 1623, report 'Victoria Beatrice Hilda Smith', 4 December 1963.

> …the vast majority of our members are either working women or the wives of workers and it is from this section of women that we seek – and receive – our main support. And, of course, it is to this section that our policy and activity are directed.[70]

Archived interviews with prominent UAW office bearers and core activists contain reference to the makeup of UAW membership. Descriptions include Marj Lambert's appraisal of attendees at the first meeting of the UAW in Melbourne: 'They were working class people mostly, but thinking, intelligent people.' [71] In differentiating the UAW from the WLM, Nell Johns declared: 'We worked with working class women – couldn't write a letter.'[72] Meg Arrowsmith (formerly Meg Cash) recalled perceiving some mistrust directed towards her from the UAW's rank and file membership due to her relatively privileged upbringing and refined demeanour. Arrowsmith confirmed that the 'women in the groups had a working-class background.'[73] Barbara Curthoys, Hilda Smith and Yvonne Smith have given, within oral history records, similar descriptions of the UAW's rank and file membership.[74] CPA functionary Florence Russell, responsible for work amongst women in Victoria, described the UAW membership as 'militant working-class women' in an address to the 1963 Annual General Meeting of the UAW. [75]

The subjective nature of the evidence describing the class orientation of UAW members is mitigated by the lack of any conflicting descriptors. Inevitably there are individual exceptions to this apparent class hegemony – particularly within the leadership – such as Meg Arrowsmith or Western Australia's branch president Roma Gilchrist. These members' motivations in advocating on behalf of the working class can be explained by an adherence to socialist ideology, and/or commitment to the CPA.[76] Other members, such as Alison Dickie, perceived their role as working class advocates as being consistent with 'Christian ideals.'[77] The collective class identity of the UAW membership is certainly one factor

[70] Union of Australian Women press statement, 1 November 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[71] Marj Lambert interview with Suzanne Fabian, 16 February 1995, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[72] Nell Johns interview with Jodi Ellis, 16 July 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[73] Meg Arrowsmith and Hilda Smith interview with Jodi Ellis, 16 October 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[74] Freda Brown and Barbara Curthoys interview with Suzanne Fabian, 17 February 1995; Hilda Smith interview with Jodi Ellis, 14 August 1984; Yvonne Smith interview with Jodi Ellis, 29 September 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections
[75] NAA: A6122/45, 1623, report 'Union of Australian Women (Vic) 1963 Annual General Meeting', 26 November 1963, p. 9.
[76] See also: Nell Johns interview with Jodi Ellis, 16 July 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[77] Alison Dickie interview with Jodie Ellis, 31 July 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

relevant to its characterisation as 'working class'. As suggested by the organisation itself, the orientation of its policy and activity are equally relevant. [78]

Our Women: public representations of the UAW

The content of *Our Women* is revealing in identifying its intended audience. The magazine is peppered with stories of real and fictional hardships experienced by the working class. 'It will affect us all, from farmers to wharfies, from miners to transport workers', reads an article critical of Britain's pending inclusion in the European common market.[79] The scope of 'us' is firmly placed within 'blue collar', working class professions. In a 1961 issue, UAW members are identified as working in factories making air conditioners, cake tins, lipstick containers and employed as sheet metal workers.[80] The editorial of this issue declares that 'above all, we need a government which represents the working people –…not those of the wealthy monopolies'.[81] Articles supporting women working in the metal trades striking for better pay, and warning women in the textile industry to beware of working in 'outside' employment due to exploitation suggest a working class readership; as do the fictional articles which almost exclusively represent the stoicism, solidarity and hardships of working class life:[82] A housewife who experiences humiliating treatment when she ventures into employment as a cleaner to supplement her husband's income;[83] a pensioner dreaming of 'chops' for dinner in the dole queue;[84] a son who decides to sell his car to help his family after the local mine closes – these stories purposely elicit sympathy or empathy for the working class, depending on where the reader is situated.[85] Equally as relevant, are the stories and women not represented in *Our Women*. Despite the UAW's invitation to women 'across classes', there is an overt imbalance in representing all but working-class life.

Our Women was undoubtedly a source of pride within the UAW, despite the organisation's struggle – and eventual failure – to ensure the magazine's financial viability.[86] Fabian and Loh point out that the

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[78] Union of Australian Women press statement, 1 November 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[79] 'The common market – and you', *Our Women,* June August 1962, p. 26, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[80] 'Talking shop', *Our Women,* October-December 1961, p. 2; 'You'll get the sack', *Our Women,* October-December 1961, pp. 12-13, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[81] 'Editorial', *Our Women,* October-December 1961, p. 27, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[82] 'Out on strike', *Our Women,* March-May 1961, p. 29; 'What's wrong with outdoor work?', *Our Women,* March-May 1961, p. 6, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[83] 'Make way for the little woman in the print frock', *Our Women,* September-December 1962, p. 4, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[84] 'A chop for her dinner', *Our Women,* September-December 1963, p. 6, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[85] 'End of a holiday', *Our Women,* Anniversary Issue 1963, p. 4, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[86] See for example: Inter-branch correspondence from National Committee, 8 September 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

magazine exuded professionalism in spite of being entirely produced and written by amateur journalists and volunteers.[87] The quality of articles and the expectation that women readers were after more than just recipes and fashion are indeed a testament to the talented team of UAW members responsible for the publication. However, it is as a tool of propaganda dissemination that *Our Women* demonstrates the seamless manner in which the UAW framed political issues as important and relevant to ordinary working-class women. The UAW members responsible for the magazine viewed it as a means of building their organisation – potentially attracting new members and disseminating information beneficial to its agenda.[88] Perhaps most significantly, the magazine was an attempt to enculturate ordinary women into the world of politics, providing examples of women's social action and normalising women's interest in public affairs. Simic has framed this as an attempt to 'redefine the potential of women…especially housewives.'[89]

A 1961 article asks the reader to form her own, hypothetical political policy. The writer then describes the 'horror' many women might feel at answering this question. However, the reader is further encouraged in the thought exercise:

> Yet it is the ordinary women who have helped shape Union of Australian Women policy and it is our claim that if adopted by political parties and acted upon in Canberra, it would help to solve our countries most burning problems. [90]

Of course, it is impossible to say if the magazine influenced its readers on issues of class and politics, beyond their existing sympathies. Records show that the magazine was sold predominantly in areas already frequented by working class women: UAW members canvassed the queue of women collecting their payments on endowment day, factory gates where women were employed, and targeted the wives of trade union members.[91] Nevertheless, as Simic has pointed out, the content of the magazine reveals an acute awareness of class politics and a conscious effort to frame political issues innocuously, softened by association with articles espousing respectable, socially acceptable representations of womanhood.

The editorial team of *Our Women* was always careful to frame women's oppression as stemming from an unjust economic and social system, and remained resolutely allied to working class men.[92] This

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[87] Fabian and Loh, *Left Wing Ladies,* 44; *Victorian Section. Union of Australian Women 1950-1970,* c. 1970, p. 4, 6.2.1 Victorian Section – Union of Australian Women: 1950-1970, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[88] *Our Women* report, November 1962, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[89] Simic, 'Butter not Bombs', 07.5.
[90] 'Make Canberra's deeds fit Australia's needs', *Our Women,* October-December 1961, p. 10, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[91] *Our Women* report, November 1962, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections; Preston Meeting Minutes, 2 March 1966, p. 1, 1.8 Reports/papers, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[92] 'Support union claims in Queensland', *Our Women*, June-August 1963, p. 14, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

sentiment was repeatedly espoused both in UAW literature, and in internal discussion.[93] This is a dimension that fundamentally differentiated the UAW's position from that of 'middle class' feminists, who would later view women's oppression as symptomatic of a male dominated hierarchy.[94] As ideas of 'intersection' have become increasingly relevant to contemporary feminism, with factors like race, culture and gender identity influencing feminist discourse, the inclusion of a class analysis on gendered oppression by pioneering socialists is an early example of intersectional awareness. The UAW certainly perceived the disproportionate deprivation of women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and acknowledged the additional burden of systemic disadvantage on Aboriginal women, discussed further in Chapters Four and Five. Although the UAW's engagement with migrant women engendered some understanding of their unique problems, its efforts to recruit migrant women and address their specific issues lacked consistency.

The UAW's work with migrant women

The 1950s saw a significant increase in migration, a factor which caused some concern within working class communities. Many new migrants sought 'blue-collar' work and employers regarded migrant workers as a valuable and exploitable source of labour, fomenting resentment among some workers.[95] Post-war migration saw 'displaced persons' from war ravaged Europe arrive in Australia with a variety of cultures, customs and languages. These differences were used by some media outlets and politicians to isolate and demonise migrants, particularly from Eastern Europe.[96] Migrants from outside of the United Kingdom were barred from entering Australia if they possessed a criminal record and were labelled as potential criminals despite a lower rate of criminal offending than the broader Australian population.[97] In contrast, British citizens were not subjected to criminal background checks and were the 'preferred' type of migrant from the point of view of the newly formed Department of Immigration. Although British migrants certainly enjoyed a more privileged position in their new home, life was difficult for all newly arrived migrants to varying degrees. Against the backdrop of the White Australia Policy and issues affecting the working class, such as insufficient housing availability, low wages and infrastructure deficits, community attitudes towards migrants – particularly from Europe – were fraught. Though the UAW maintained solidarity within working class communities, the organisation abhorred discrimination and supported a multicultural Australia.

[93] Secretary report of first annual conference, 8 November 1951, p. 2, 1.8 Reports/papers, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[94] Lake, *Getting Equal,* 210.
[95] Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties,* 158.
[96] Andy Kaladelfos and Mark Finnane, 'Immigration and criminality: Australia's post-war inquiries', *Australian Journal of Politics and History,* 64/1 (March 2018), 48-64 at 48 and 49.
[97] Kaladelfos and Finnane, 'Immigration and criminality: Australia's post-war inquiries', 49.

The UAW supported trade union policy calling for the cessation of mass migration; however, this opposition was motivated by their perception of poor planning in the settlement of newly arrived communities. In principle the UAW supported migration, pending the provision of adequate housing, services and, crucially, jobs for existing and future arrivals.[98] In 1961 the UAW criticised the Menzies government for continuing to bring migrants to Australia in large numbers when unemployment was 'greater than at any time during the depression years.' The UAW went on to discuss its interactions with migrants in NSW regarding unemployment, concluding: 'Debts are mounting, work is hard to obtain, and so they despair of ever being able to leave the hostels, which to say the least, are a disgrace to a so-called civilised community'.[99]

In 1953 the NSW branch of the UAW had supported British migrants in their demand to prepare their own food within migrant hostels in Newcastle and Sydney.[100] The experience of new migrants within hostels was a persistent concern of the UAW. In 1961 *Our Women* featured an article deploring the poor conditions suffered by migrant families when UAW members canvassed the area with an unemployment petition.[101] Earlier in the year, the UAW had labelled the means test for unemployed married women to claim employment benefits, as unfairly disadvantaging migrant women in particular.[102] Through engagement with migrant women and by highlighting their plight in publications, the UAW promoted solidarity with migrant women while simultaneously identifying them as receptive to politicisation.

The UAW viewed migrant hostels as fertile ground for the sale of *Our Women*.[103] The organisation encouraged new migrants to engage in activism around unemployment and courted their involvement in UAW activities.[104] The Victorian UAW appears to have led a sustained campaign in the early 1960s to recruit or otherwise politicise migrant women. Victorian UAW members had routinely visited migrant hostels in various suburbs, imploring the broader membership to do the same in order to 'gain new friends and members while at the same time assisting migrant women to overcome their problems'.[105] The UAW admonished the Menzies government, stating that migrants had been brought to Australia 'under false pretences and promises of a rosy life'. During these visits in 1961, UAW

[98] 'Build the Union of Australian Women', c. 1951, p. 2, 1.8 Reports/papers, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[99] Secretary's report to the Annual Meeting of the UAW (NSW), 21 October 1961, p. 1, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[100] Report of the President of the UAW (NSW) to the Annual Conference, c. 1953, p. 4, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[101] 'Migrants Brought out to Poverty', *Our Women,* October-December 1961, p. 11, 4.1.1. Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[102] Interstate correspondence from the Victorian branch of the UAW to the National Committee of the UAW, 9 June 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[103] Minutes of the Second National Conference of the UAW, 27 May-2 June 1960, p. 8, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[104] Minutes of UAW Executive Meeting (Vic), 16 August 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[105] NAA: A6122/45, 1620, Annual Report of the UAW (Vic), 1961-62, 15 March 1962, p. 8.

members explained the Australian voting system. It was reported that the women they addressed 'had no idea about Australian political parties or the preference system'. Following the UAW's explanation, the residents of the hostel expressed interest in further discussion and purchased copies of *Our Women*.[106]

Although there are sporadic references to work within migrant communities throughout the 1950s and 1960s, this work appears to have been inconsistent compared to other UAW campaigns. In 1970 the UAW called for a renewed nation-wide effort to recruit migrant women, declaring that the needs of new Australians coincided with their own.[107] This implies that efforts to recruit migrant women to the UAW had lapsed at some time during the 1960s. An ASIO report from the early 1950s stated that the UAW was making efforts to 'establish UAW groups among migrants', indicating the longevity of these attempts.[108] It is difficult to determine with any certainty how successful the UAW's occasional attempts to recruit migrant women were. ASIO 'pen pictures' (often jarringly unkind written descriptions of individual UAW members) described characteristics which may have denoted a migrant status – struggling with English or speaking with an Irish accent, for example. Victorian member Betty Oke recalls 'all different nationalities' populating the Rosanna branch of the UAW in Melbourne – though whether members of 'different nationalities' were migrants or simply claimed diverse cultural heritages is unknown. Regardless of its success or failure in the recruitment of migrants, the UAW advocated for migrant families on the basis of class solidarity and the universality of motherhood. These factors informed much of the activism undertaken by the UAW.

The UAW and social services

The UAW drew a connection between politics and the domestic realm, giving interested housewives a mandate for inclusion in the public world of politics. From an ideological perspective, the organisation's cooperative relationship with the CPA and trade unions fostered class solidarity with working men and their specific issues. From a practical standpoint, married women relied on their husbands financially, via the utility of the male family wage. This made workplace relations an economic issue affecting both genders, regardless of women's low rates of participation in the labour force. In a 1961 press statement, the UAW asserted that 'working women and the wives of workers' were at the centre of policy and activity.[109] The UAW deliberately and effectively connected the

[106] Interstate correspondence from the Victorian branch of the UAW to the National Committee of the UAW, 23 July 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[107] Minutes of the 5th National Conference of the UAW, 29 May-1 June 1970, p. 3, 1.1 Programme, Constitution and Aims, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[108] NAA: A6122/16, 1174, report, Union of Australian Women, c. 1953, p. 4.
[109] Union of Australian Women press statement, 1 November 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

Menzies government's wage freezes and other 'anti-working-class' policies to the high cost of living and inflation, the latter two being issues affecting the household budget.[110]

In its inaugural Victorian newsletter, the UAW prioritised its 'prices petition', citing food, clothing and housing as typifying the effects of inflation. Accompanying advice suggested that signatories to the 'prices petition', having become agreeable to the UAW's point of view, should be asked to sign the 'Atom bomb petition' – a far more contentious prospect, given the anti-communist rhetoric around peace and disarmament, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four.[111] Equating populist, safe issues with controversial ones was a shrewd tactic which the UAW employed consistently. In reporting a UAW campaign to urgently improve sewerage pipes at the Mont Park Mental Hospital in West Heidelberg, a 1952 circular provided information on the 'five power peace pact' – a diplomatic initiative promoted by the USSR.[112] The branch responsible for the health infrastructure campaign was reportedly co-canvassing petitions, declaring peaceful foreign policy the key to community funding for services such as improved sewerage. This somewhat tenuous connection further exemplifies the UAW's approach to introducing controversial political topics, as seen within *Our Women*. Such linking of issues further demonstrates how local groups integrated campaigns supported by the Executive branch of the organisation into their every-day activities. Making connections between political talking points was also a way to remind its constituents of the common enemy to the working people – the Menzies government.

The National Committee's 1961 call to mobilise the UAW's resources in an attempt to oust the Federal Government at election time was endorsed and extended to conservative led State governments, based on the Liberal-Country Party's treatment of workers, and by extension their families.[113] The UAW had long married these 'anti-working-class' policies to its demand for increased social services, citing war expenditure and a taxation policy which favoured the wealthy as the reason for inadequate funding.[114] The UAW pointed to Australia's significant military spending to demonstrate what it saw as the government's skewed priorities, attempting to discredit Menzies and the increasing escalation of international tensions, whilst campaigning on an issue with a groundswell of public support.

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[110] 'An explanation to women wage and salary earners', 30 October 1962, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[111] UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1950, p. 1, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[112] UAW Newsletter (Vic), May 1952, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[113] Report, UAW Annual Meeting (Qld), November 1962, p. 1, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[114] 'Build the Union of Australian Women', c. 1951, p. 1, 1.8 Reports/papers; statements/policies; submissions; resolutions, UAW Records, VU Special Collections; 'Make Canberra's deeds fit Australia's needs', *Our Women,* October-December 1961, p. 10, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

The inclusion of women's unpaid domestic work within the scope of labour analysis has long been identified by feminist scholars as vital to economic theory.[115] Consequently, social service payments are a crucial component of any critique of women's inclusion within the Australian economic system. This is consistent with both Eisenstein and Macintyre's positions, described above, and one which aligns with the UAW's efforts in obtaining these services.[116] The UAW claimed to speak for thousands of women through its 'Mother and Child Campaign', emphatically stating that the 'majority of women on a low income' were unable to meet the most basic costs of raising their children.[117] This national campaign began in 1956 and continued into the 1960s, spawning petitions, deputations and collaborations with various organisations and interest groups. As the campaign grew in support and scope, its mandate included advocacy for increased social service payments to the unemployed, young people, widows and Aboriginal Australians.[118]

In 1960 the National Executive revealed plans to compile family budgets, which it believed would 'show hardship suffered by average working families'.[119] This was in service of a new 'National Prices Campaign', a full decade after it launched its first 'prices petition' in 1950. This campaign would be linked to the 'Mother and Child Campaign' in an overall effort to defend living standards. The UAW claimed partial victory in 1964, when the Federal Government increased and extended child endowment to include older children, and younger children from large families.[120]

> When the Federal Government announced some improvement in Child Endowment including continuance of payments for students until 18, the UAW as a national body felt satisfaction at the result of its long sustained campaign. When advisable the campaign for the other demands in our program will be taken up.[121]

The UAW's consistent agitation around the improvement of social services for women, pensioners, youth and the unemployed were expressed as an indictment on the economic conditions for which the Menzies government must bear responsibility.[122] Thus, the UAW's advocacy for wage workers was not the only social action specifically undertaken on behalf of working-class women and children. In

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[115] Nugent, 'Women's Employment and Professionalism in Australia', 3-4.
[116] Eisenstein, *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism,* 30; Macintyre, *The Labour Experiment,* 5.
[117] Child Endowment 1958, p. 3, 5.4 Child Endowment, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[118] National Executive meeting – Mother and Child campaign, 5 August 1958, 5.4 Child Endowment, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[119] National Executive inter-branch correspondence, 5 April 1960, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[120] Dale Daniels, 'Social Security Payments for People Caring for Children, 1912-1918: A Chronology', *Parliament of Australia*, 29 January 2009, <https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/BN/0809/childrenpartb>.
[121] UAW Newsletter (Vic), November 1964', p. 4, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[122] See for example: Union of Australian Women press statement, 1 November 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas and Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

addition to the partially successful Mother and Child Campaign, the establishment of inclusive social service payments, adequate housing, facilities for children and protesting against high prices and shortages of staple foodstuffs, were campaigns around issues affecting the daily running of a household – 'women's work'.

Petitions, letter-writing and publicity campaigns were routine, as were factory gate meetings and deputations to parliament.[123] Since 1951 the UAW had participated in the Milk Board Enquiry, presenting the findings of its own 'Cost of Living' survey on behalf of 'housewives and children' in 1964.[124] The economic and social ramifications of inadequate services, including social welfare, and the difficulties of caring for a family without basic necessities were immediate and debilitating for working class women undertaking the unpaid labour of a housewife and mother in a society which still systemically discriminated against them. Despite what must have been chronic disappointment in the face of Menzies' continued refusal to meet the demands of working-class women, the UAW persevered with the same core campaigns throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

Working class women, working class politics: The UAW and the CPA

Within the literature dealing directly with the UAW, it is universally acknowledged that the formation of the organisation was on the initiative of the Communist Party.[125] Beyond inception, however, the extent and character of the Party's relationship to the UAW becomes less straight forward. Fabian and Loh have posited that the CPA's focus on international affairs elicited substantial influence in this area, leaving the UAW to manage its local campaigns autonomously.[126] This point is pertinent in the context of local branch activities; however, UAW policy at the national level indicates 'influence' throughout its international and domestic programme. ASIO reports from the early 1960s suggest that CPA influence was widespread nationally, matched only by the influence of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) on matters of international relevance.

The question of whether this synergy existed due to official Communist Party oversight, or merely because the UAW leadership was weighted with communist women who shared the CPA's agenda, has implications regarding the autonomy and overall complexity of the organisation. In addition, the UAW's effective advocacy of working-class women was at least partially dependent on its ability to be given an audience by sympathetic politicians –almost exclusively members of the ALP. This

[123] See for example: Child Endowment 1958, p. 3, 5.4 Child Endowment, UAW Records, VU Special Collections; Betty Olle interview with Jodi Ellis, 15 March 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[124] 'Rackets raise milk prices', *Guardian,* 12 April 1951, 3; 4; UAW Newsletter (Vic), November 1964, p. 6, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[125] Lake, *Getting Equal,* 210; Damousi, *Women Come Rally,* 152; Curthoys and McDonald, *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade,* 7; Fabian and Loh, *Left-wing Ladies,* 18-19; O'Lincoln, 'Against the Stream', 95; Simic, 'Butter not Bombs', 07.1.
[126] Fabian and Loh, *Left-wing Ladies,* 46.

section will explore the relationship between the UAW and CPA and the ways in which that relationship both engendered and hindered the primary political function of the UAW – to politicise working-class women and advocate effectively on their behalf within the mainstream political system.

The political milieu in which the UAW emerged was characterised by the divisive relationship between progressive and conservative ideologies, which were exacerbated by the Cold War. Although the UAW declared itself open to women across classes, the organisation was very much involved in class politics through its affiliation with the CPA, its alliance with the left wing of the labour movement and, as detailed above, its specific focus on issues affecting working class women and their families. A close examination of UAW and CPA policy between the period 1950-1970 reveals striking similarities. The rhetoric and propaganda strategies employed by each organisation are indicative of substantial CPA influence over the UAW, a point generally confirmed by scholars of the latter organisation – former UAW activists and CPA members Curthoys and McDonald notwithstanding.[127]

Although official denials of communist influence have been routinely promoted by the organisation and its loyal alumni, other former members such as Alma Moreton (critical of both the UAW and the CPA) have broken ranks to confirm the UAW's deference to Communist Party policy.[128] The representation of each organisation by the other within their respective publications is further evidence of the inconsistency between the UAW's public position and its actual relationship to the CPA. Within official communist publications the *Guardian* in Victoria and the *Tribune* in NSW, the UAW was routinely referenced. Its activities were promoted and reported, its leaders were quoted and its membership was lauded as representing the views of politically thoughtful, but average Australian working class women.[129]

Conversely, the UAW rarely mentioned the CPA within *Our Women*. In such instances where the Party was referenced, it was to briefly list it among other, more mainstream supporters of the cause

[127] For example: Fabian and Loh acknowledge CPA influence within international policies, but present members' recollections as evidence of disinterest on the part of the CPA in other areas: Fabian and Loh, *Left-wing Ladies,* 45-46; Damousi states '..the [UAW's] energy and direction derived from the Party': Damousi, *Women Come Rally,* 152; Lake discusses the UAW's communist origins and tradition of 'labour movement feminism': Lake, *Getting Equal,* 210-213; Simic acknowledges the UAW's debt to 'communist tradition' and contextualises her article using the backdrop of Cold War political divisions: Simic, 'Butter not bombs', 07.1; O'Lincoln writes 'UAW policies were always compatible with those of the Party and the group has to be seen as part of the Communist strategy of building a 'broad peoples' front'': O'Lincoln, 'Against the stream', 95-97; Conversely, Curthoys and McDonald present evidence supporting the UAW's independence from the CPA after its establishment: Curthoys and McDonald, *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade,* 7; 102.
[128] Alma Morton interview with Jodi Ellis, 27 November 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Reports, VU Special Collections.
[129] See for example: 'Women's Union Joins Fight for Peace, Liberty', *Guardian,* 15 September 1950, 8; 'UAW Organising Protest Meeting Soon', *Guardian,* 20 September 1950, 8; 'Women's Union Gaining New Members', *Guardian,* 29 March 1951, 6.

being promoted.[130] This dichotomy can be explained by the UAW's aspiration towards mainstream appeal. Whilst reference to the organisation within the communist press would not have been widely noticed by potential members outside of militant left-wing circles, UAW literature was produced with the explicit aim of attracting a broad membership.[131] Anti-communism necessitated 'plausible deniability' in relation to communist influence on the UAW, a strategy which seems to have been at least somewhat effective, with many former members recalling their initial ignorance of CPA involvement – including Party members.[132]

Despite the UAW presenting itself as non-party political, its support for the CPA during the 'Constitution Alteration (Powers to Deal with Communists and Communism) 1951' referendum courted dismissal from the media and a fraught, uneven relationship with the ALP.[133] The nature of the UAW's relationship with the CPA throughout the period 1950-1970 is most transparent through its overlapping membership. Certainly, numerous UAW members exhibited allegiance to communism, and to the Party. UAW members and affiliates who stood for election to parliament as communist candidates included Agnes Doig and Doris McRae.[134] UAW National President, Noreen Hewett, took a leave of absence from her role in 1960 to travel with a Communist Party delegation to 'Socialist countries' – identified by Victorian office bearer, Hilda Smith as China.[135] The stated purpose of the trip was to 'closely study the conditions and lives of the people in their new society'.[136] Hewett believed that for those who had 'socialism dear to their hearts', observing life in socialist countries would help to break down the barriers of 'mistrust and misunderstanding'. This would be crucial, she believed, to her future work in Australia with the UAW and Miners' Women's Auxiliaries. The National Executive expressed unanimous approval for Hewett's decision, and official congratulations were offered by the organisation.

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[130] See for example: Untitled article, *Our Women*, October-December 1961, p. 19, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[131] *Our Women* report, November 1962, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[132] Hilda Smith interview with Jodie Ellis, 14 August 1984; Alma Morton interview with Jodi Ellis, 27 November 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[133] For example, the UAW officially denies affiliation with any political party here: *Victorian Section. Union of Australian Women 1950-1970,* c. 1970, p. 2, 6.2.1 Victorian Section – Union of Australian Women: 1950-1970, UAW Records, VU Special Collections; Former members discuss relationship to media: Meg Arrowsmith and Hilda Smith interview with Jodi Ellis, 16/10/1984; Marg Lambert interview with Suzanne Fabian, 16/2/1995, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections; Curthoys and McDonald discuss UAW/ALP relations: Curthoys and McDonald, *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade,* 30.
[134] 'Communist Party Senate Team', *Guardian*, 5 April 1951, 1; 'Miss Doris McRae for seat of Henty', *Guardian,* 5 April 1951, 8.
[135] Hilda Smith interview with Jodi Ellis, 14 August 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[136] Minutes of national administrative meeting, 19 April 1960, p. 1, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas and Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

Out of 87 members identified through the Victorian branch records of the UAW and some secondary sources, 54 were further identified through ASIO reports or other public records, as members or suspected members of the CPA.[137] Whilst it is important to acknowledge that this is a small sample of the women affiliated with the UAW between 1950 and 1970, and that ASIO's choice of surveillance subjects was skewed towards women with suspected connections to the Party, this figure is nonetheless instructive. As the fanfare surrounding Noreen Hewett's mission to understand socialism in action suggests, the leadership of the UAW was overwhelmingly supportive of CPA efforts. Most of the prominent and influential office bearers of the UAW interviewed by Ellis in 1984-1985 held membership to the Party at some point.[138] Although there is little to indicate significant Party connections within the rank-and-file membership of the UAW, the predominance of communists in positions of leadership makes Party influence in the operation of the UAW all but certain. A 1960 ASIO report on the UAW stated:

> From its inception the UAW has been under complete communist control in all states and it is rare to find other than party members on the executives of the organisation. Almost without exception, the positions of President and Secretary of all state organisations have always been filled by Party members. [139]

Organisational autonomy: unofficial affiliate or communist front?

These documented connections explain the significant similarities between the CPA and UAW over policy direction, core issues and propaganda presentation, which will be discussed in detail below. They indicate considerable communist political influence. Less clear, however, are the implications of this influence on the UAW's autonomy. Accounts vary as to how much input the Party had on the affairs of the UAW. Nell Johns recalled viewing her work in the UAW as being part of her CPA responsibilities.[140] Johns also recalled male communists' oversight of work within the State Women's Committee, yet she also juxtaposed this recollection with her perception that they had no interest in it, including the operation of the UAW. These statements imply that the CPA both participated in the UAW's activities to some extent, and downgraded them, the latter contrary to the CPA's public stance that fostering women's involvement in class struggle was a priority.

[137] These figures were collated using ASIO files: NAA: A6122, Items 1185, 1186 and 1617-1624. Additional secondary sources include Fabian and Loh, *Left-wing ladies,* 3-24; Lofthouse, *Who's who of Australian women,* 136.
[138] See: 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[139] NAA: A6122/44, 1448, Report on UAW, c. 1960, p. 1.
[140] Nell Johns interview with Jodi Ellis, 16 July 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

Meg Arrowsmith recalled joining the UAW after being approached by the CPA. Arrowsmith's understanding was that officials desired a 'party woman' in a position of authority in Victoria.[141] Fabian and Loh present similar information regarding Ailsa O'Connor's appointment as Secretary of the Victorian UAW in the early 1950s.[142] Alma Morton believed that Victorian UAW members affiliated with the CPA routinely held 'fraction' meetings undisclosed to non-Party members.[143] Moreton, a Communist Party member herself, disapproved of such activities and declined to participate. However, ASIO records support Moreton's recollections, claiming that the CPA routinely held fraction meetings with UAW cadres to discuss strategy and provide instructions for campaigns, recruitment and reducing the visibility of the UAW's communist connections.[144] A 1960 report described a fraction meeting during that year's Annual Conference. While the rank-and-file members participated in the outings and social events described in the conference programme, UAW office bearers who held Party membership attended an 'all day meeting' at Communist Party headquarters in Sydney.[145]

Amongst the evidence suggesting some level of authority by the Party over the operation of the UAW, are records detailing what came to be known as 'the split'. Fabian and Loh have offered a thorough analysis of the events which unfolded during the 1963 Sino-Soviet dispute, inferring that communist politics had, during this event, directly undermined the autonomy of the UAW.[146] According to the UAW's constitution, it was open to women '..of all opinions and beliefs who subscribe to the objects of the organisation'.[147] Hilda Smith and Meg Arrowsmith challenged and ultimately exposed the UAW's lack of commitment to these words, when they refused to endorse the partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, officially supported by the USSR, and also UAW, WIDF and CPA policy. Hilda Smith has asserted that Meg Arrowsmith and herself (the sitting President and Secretary of the Victorian branch of the UAW respectively), were strongarmed out of the organisation because the CPA was concerned that they would 'lose the UAW' had Smith and Arrowsmith retained office.[148]

The fallout from this internal disagreement reveals that some members at least came to believe that UAW policy was dictated by the CPA.[149] The Victorian members who were interviewed about the

[141] Meg Arrowsmith interview with Jodi Ellis, 16 October 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[142] Fabian and Loh, *Left-wing ladies,* 23.
[143] Alma Moreton interview with Jodi Ellis, 26 February 1985, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[144] See for example: NAA: A6122/16, 1174, report, 'C. P. of A. Women's Cadres' Meeting', 19 June 1956.
[145] NAA: A6122/44, 1448, Report on UAW, c. 1960, p. 1.
[146] Fabian and Loh, *Left-Wing Ladies,* 55-60.
[147] Inter-branch correspondence from National Executive, 'Constitution – Membership', 1.3 Meetings: Agendas and Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[148] Hilda Smith interview with Jodi Ellis, 14 August 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[149] NAA: A6122/45, 1623, report, Union of Australian Women (Vic) 1963 Annual General Meeting, 26 November 1963, p. 7.

aftermath of 'the split' recalled the State Committee irrevocably altered by this incident, with severe social consequences for those on the 'wrong side' of the argument.[150] Those who stayed dealt with the loss of a significant number of experienced personnel. However, these oral history records further suggest that many of the 'groups' (local branches) were largely unaffected, and as Fabian and Loh have suggested, unaware of the political upheaval taking place in their own organisation.[151]

National Secretary of the UAW and leading CPA member Freda Brown was central to the events which unfolded during the 1963 split within the UAW. In an article for *Our Women,* Brown harshly criticised the Chinese position on the partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, incensing Victorian members who believed the article was contrary to the UAW's non-party political platform.[152] Brown denounced the group of dissenters from Victoria, led by Meg Arrowsmith and Hilda Smith, during the UAW's Third National Conference in September.[153] In November, Brown was both accused of undemocratic conduct (relating to the Third National Conference) and defended in her views about the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty at the Victorian UAW's AGM. During this meeting, Arrowsmith and Smith were removed from their positions within the UAW and distanced from the Party.[154] However in 1970, another split within the Party occurred and this time, Brown was on the minority side.[155]

According to Milner, Brown was not reindorsed to the Communist Party National Committee during the 22nd Congress of the CPA in 1970 for disagreeing with what Brown characterised as 'Trotskyist' ideas beginning to dominate Party policy. Unlike Arrowsmith and Smith, however, Brown's falling out with the CPA did not undermine her authority within the UAW. To the contrary, under Freda Brown's leadership the UAW became increasingly distanced from the CPA during the 1970s, following the latter's support for Women's Liberation and Brown's subsequent resignation from the Party in 1971.[156] The details of the respective 'splits' within the Australian communist movement and the ways in which they differently influenced events within the UAW highlights the role of individual members active in each organisation. These events suggest that Freda Brown's influence over the UAW was greater than that of the CPA as a whole. If the 1963 'split' is an example of how the CPA

[150] Marg Lambert interview with Suzanne Fabian, 16 February 1995; Hilda Smith interview with Jodi Ellis, 14 August 1984; Betty Olle interview with Jodi Ellis, 15 March 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[151] Yvonne Smith interview with Jodi Ellis, 29 September 1984; Marg Lambert interview with Suzanne Fabian, 16 February 1995, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections; Fabian and Loh, *Left-wing Ladies,* 57.
[152] 'World congress of women was truly democratic', *Our Women,* September-December 1963, p. 12, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections; A6122/45, 1622, report, Third National Conference of the UAW, 29 October 1963, p. 15.
[153] NAA: A6122/45, 1622, report, Third National Conference of the UAW, 29 October 1963, p. 16.
[154] NAA: A6122/45, 1623, report, Union of Australian Women (Vic) 1963 Annual General Meeting, 26 November 1963.
[155] Milner, *Swimming against the tide,* 137.
[156] Milner, *Swimming against the tide,* 138-143.

responded when the UAW's continued compliance was under threat, the 1970 'split' suggests that the UAW's commitment to the CPA was also conditional upon the good will of the UAW leadership.

The anti-communist political climate in which the UAW operated in the 1950s and 1960s undoubtedly played a role in the organisation's reluctance to claim affiliation to the CPA. This was also true of its disinclination to publicly identify as socialist. Indeed, the proceedings of CPA meetings with UAW cadres explicitly demonstrate the CPA's desire to downplay its own role in UAW activities. The CPA reported during one such meeting that Party functionary Betty Reilly deliberately excluded the UAW from articles referring to work among women in the *Communist Review* 'for security reasons'.[157] Although the UAW cadres were instructed to view their work within the UAW as part of their commitment to the Communist Party, they were also instructed to conceal the extent of their Party connections where possible. In discussing the role of the UAW in 1956 the CPA Central Committee decided: 'The UAW must find its own forms of activity, and there is no intention in the future to force the Party on the UAW. However, a special committee is to be set up to keep the Party in touch with the UAW'.[158] Despite this, the cadres within the UAW remained in leadership positions. According to ASIO, UAW members with Party connections continuously pushed the CPA's agenda and even used the UAW to recruit women to the CPA. At a 1964 UAW function, UAW speaker and Party member Phyllis Hopwood invited those present to take a Communist Party membership application – though the ASIO informant who reported this event noted that none of the women accepted the invitation. [159] In addition to the overt political action undertaken by the UAW in accordance with CPA policy, the primary political function of the UAW was to activate, mobilise and politicise women.[160]

Politicisation

The paucity of evidence confirming significant links between the CPA and the rank and file of UAW membership belies the significance of the Party's intentions for its 'mass movement' of women. Whether a realistic goal or not, the CPA intended to use the UAW to widen its sphere of influence.[161] Those members involved with the Party were to be the teachers, but it was the uninitiated rank and file who were to undergo the process of politicisation. During a 1955 Party meeting for women members, an unnamed speaker delineated this process, which was then reported to ASIO by an

[157] NAA: A6122/16, 1174, report 'C. P. of A. Women Cadre's Meeting, 29 June 1956, p. 3.
[158] NAA: A6122/16, 1174, report 'C. P. of A. Women Cadre's Meeting, 29 June 1956, p. 3.
[159] NAA: A6119/6007, report on special function of the UAW, 27 November 1964.
[160] This can be inferred from the breadth of evidence presented here, and is confirmed by former UAW members, for example: Meg Arrowsmith interview with Jodi Ellis, 16/10/1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[161] See for example: Damousi, *Women come rally,* 152; The CPA discusses plans for its 'mass organisation' for women': *Australia's Way Forward. Programme of the Communist Party of Australia and Agrarian Programme of the Communist Party of Australia.* Resolution for 20th Congress, Item 2/7, Box 1, CPA Victorian State Committee, UMA.

informant. First, a woman was to be engaged socially, without any mention of politics. Next, she was invited to join the UAW, at which time 'definite channels of thought' were instilled. Finally, the 'recruit' was invited to the home of a CPA member and introduced to major political talking points before being invited to join the Party.[162] Whether the ASIO informant was directly transcribing this information from the speaker or was extrapolating from a more general discussion is unknown; however, the UAW and CPA alike routinely expressed commitment to the political education of working-class women, if not their direct recruitment to the Party.

By design – both that of the CPA and the UAW – the latter organisation was committed to drawing women from relatively varied backgrounds into its ranks. Ideally, this would include middle-class as well as working-class women; employed and unemployed women, and women from both metropolitan and regional areas.[163] Pragmatically, the idea of a 'broad cross-section' of women referred to working-class, left-leaning women who were not yet indoctrinated socialists. These women were the wives of workers or less frequently, factory workers themselves.[164] The CPA viewed women as a sub-demographic within the working-class in need of political education – primarily, the acquisition of a class consciousness.[165] The CPA and UAW advocated women's mass inclusion in the workforce as the path to full equality in public life. This view is a prominent aspect of the Party's 'Policy for Women' and was expressed by the UAW within *Our Women* and in Gwen George's 1961 speech to the UAW National Conference, partially quoted above.[166] Like the UAW, the CPA advocated the provision of creches and kindergartens accessible to all mothers and children, in addition to improved maternity services. It did, however, leave the campaigning on these issues to 'women's organisations'.[167] This was framed as a 'self-help' approach to politicisation.

> It is through activity, whether in the home, fighting for facilities for childcare, or at work, fighting for better conditions, whether in organisations concerned with peace, education, status of women, that women learn how to conduct and win campaigns for their demands.[168]

[162] NAA: A6122/16, 1174, report, C. P. of A. Meeting for Women Members, 9 November 1955.
[163] The Constitution of the Union of Australian Women (Vic), 9 September 1950, 1.1 Programmes, constitution and aims, UAW Records, VU Special Collections; 'Union of Australian Women', *Guardian,* 4 August 1950, 6.
[164] Union of Australian Women press statement, 1 November 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[165] See: Communist Party Policy for Women, c. early 1960s, p. 18, Item 11/4 1976:0028, Box 3, CPA Victoria State Committee, UMA.
[166] Report on National Committee Meeting, 18 February 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[167] Communist Party Policy for Women, c. early 1960s, p. 18, Item 11/4 1976:0028, Box 3, CPA Victoria State Committee, UMA.
[168] Ibid, 18.

This policy, from the early 1960s, proselytises on the role of capitalism in oppressing women.[169] The Party claimed that equality would be won when society made provision to release women from their domestic burden. The document urges women to become educated, politically literate and join the class struggle, warning against the gender division wrought by feminism. The CPA did not acknowledge childcare or domestic duties as responsibilities which could be shared between male and female spouses committed to creating equitable conditions. It viewed domestic responsibility as a woman's burden to be overcome by a societal shift towards socialism. The failure of the CPA to recognise the personal as political is a deficit previously noted by Party women, and documented by Damousi.[170] The policy does, however, remark on women's role in 'supporting their menfolk' through auxiliary activities.[171]

To a present-day reader, the CPA's 'Policy for Women' might be seen as condescending in its presumptions regarding women's collective experience, particularly coming from a male-dominated organisation. Indeed, upon reflection, some former UAW communists have levelled criticism of this kind at the Party. These include Hilda Smith, Alma Moreton, Eileen Cappocchi, Nell Johns and Zelda D'Aprano.[172] However, prior to the emergence of Second Wave Feminism, the UAW – an organisation dominated by women – displayed attitudes congruent to those of the CPA on women's political education, responsibility for children and the root cause of, and solution to, women's oppression. In 1960, Rita Jamison reported to the Second National Conference that WWF women 'supported their menfolk', foreshadowing the CPA's advice to women within its manifesto – an unauthored document, which may well have included input from UAW members active within the Party.[173]

This mixture of progressive and traditional ideas about the role of women in socialist-based class struggle is what gave rise to Simic's 'political housewife'.[174] This space for women activists on the left was simultaneously beneficial and problematic. Whilst the 'political housewife' provided the UAW with a conduit for building solidarity with working class men by activating women and affirming their essential feminine character, it did not effectively address the constraints of domestic responsibility, counter to the CPA's apparent goal of integration into industry and full proletarian

[169] Ibid, 1.
[170] Damousi, *Women come rally,* 137.
[171] Ibid, 18.
[172] Meg Arrowsmith and Hilda Smith interview with Jodi Ellis, 16 October 1984; Alma Moreton interview with Jodi Ellis, 27 November 1984; Eileen Cappocchi interview with Jodi Ellis, 2 October 1984; Nell Johns interview with Jodi Ellis, 16 July 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW, VU Special Collections; D'Aprano, *Zelda*, 190-191.
[173] Minutes of the Second National Conference, 27 May – 2 June 1960, p. 6, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas and Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[174] Simic, 'Butter not bombs', 07.1.

indoctrination.[175] However, UAW activist Hilda Smith has posited that the large numbers of women engaged in domestic responsibilities at this time necessitated an educative and inclusive approach to politicisation – the likelihood of a woman of this era entering the workforce and becoming immediately radicalised was negligible without previous targeted political education.[176] Nonetheless, the CPA's (and by extension, the UAW's) unwillingness to address women's oppression as a gendered issue as well as a class issue, ultimately ceded to the more holistic approach of the WLM. This rendered the traditional communist approach to equality between the sexes redundant from the late 1960s onwards, precipitating support of liberationist tactics by the CPA – a concession the UAW was unwilling to make.[177]

Despite this important paradigm shift, which will be discussed further in Chapter Five, the politicisation of working-class 'housewives' in the 1950s and 1960s cannot be dismissed as a contributing factor to the momentum of recognising and extending women's rights in the succeeding decade. Prior to the Second Annual Conference of the NSW branch of the UAW in 1952, members were urged to bring their friends and neighbours along, stating: 'It is in this way that we will build the Union of Australian Women, and extend our influence as women in the community.'[178] The imperative to initiate women into political action was nurtured through the reciprocal sharing of ideas. In 1961, the UAW called for 'all experiences, no matter how small they may seem, in organising working women, all suggestions and ideas.'[179] National Secretary Pat Elphinston's wider address would appear to support Hilda Smith's assertion that, during this era, the political development of women was more effectively performed outside of industry. Whilst the UAW leadership displayed continued consternation regarding its inability to attract and maintain working women, the work of incentivising its rank-and-file membership to full political inclusion necessarily preceded its entry into the labour force. This task necessitated the presentation of communist policy as inclusive and relevant to a demographic marginalised by economic status and domestic isolation, and a programme which produced varied opportunities for social engagement: traditional activities and 'safe' topics for women, accompanying a radical political education.

[175] Whilst the CPA's 'Policy for women' states support for the right of women to stay home, the document makes multiple reference to employment leading to women's full inclusion in public and political life, and as the linchpin of equality between the sexes. This view is tied to the theme of working-class solidarity: Communist Party Policy for Women, c. early 1960s, p. 18, Item 11/4 1976:0028, Box 3, CPA Victoria State Committee, UMA.
[176] Meg Arrowsmith and Hilda Smith interview with Jodi Ellis, 16 October 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[177] Milner, *Swimming against the tide,* 140.
[178] Circular to all members of the UAW (NSW), 27 October 1952, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[179] Report of National Secretary, UAW National Committee meeting, 17 February 1961, p. 4, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

The approach taken by the UAW in attracting working-class housewives was, on the surface, considerably more moderate than that of its predecessor, the NHA. The NHA displayed a radical disregard for social convention, engaging in tactics considered antithetical to appropriate feminine behaviour.[180] Although the UAW did not shy away from polite civil disobedience on occasion (such as distributing leaflets counter to council dictates, and unauthorised monthly peace walks through the city) it overwhelmingly projected the appearance of respectability and normalcy – Curthoys and McDonald's titular 'hat and glove brigade' refers to a sardonic moniker given to the UAW by unattached CPA women, dismissive of its diluted radicalism. However, as CPA members, these women were already politicised. The CPA had learned from the inability of the NHA to attract a broad membership that the politicisation of Australian housewives was a process that needed greater finesse.[181] The featuring of articles describing the plight of Vietnamese civilians, or the importance of workers' rights alongside recipes and fashion tips within *Our Women* encapsulates this approach.[182] The integration of political critique into women's everyday experience necessitated the UAW to look beyond Marxist study groups, university clubs and factory appointments to areas previously dismissed as apolitical. Whilst the records of the National Branch are dominated by nationally and internationally significant political campaigns, the state and local branches contain records indicating that UAW campaigns were promoted to its members through various activities, both mundane and obviously political.

UAW luncheons were popular venues for socialising and political discussion. Women later reported that these were an incentive to get out of the house and were the only affordable outing for many.[183] Street stalls stocked with items knitted, crocheted or baked by industrious UAW members during craft classes were another way to facilitate opportunity for casual political discussion.[184] 1961 meeting minutes reveal that a 'morning tea on aspects of education' was planned by the *Our Women* editorial team and Victorian Executive, alongside plans to undertake crafting to prepare for the May Day float.[185] These typically feminine activities became conduits for political action. A 1966 Preston Branch report on a social function held at member Lila Ratcliffe's home on the subject of 'toys and

[180] Fabian and Loh, *Left-wing Ladies,* 16.
[181] This is reflected in accounts of the NHA's disbanding and the subsequent formation of the UAW; see for example: Milner, *Swimming against the tide,* 68; Curthoys and McDonald, *More than a hat and glove brigade,* 7.
[182] See for example: 'Vietnam is very close', 'Golden rules on compo' and 'Beauty for moderns', *Our Women,* June-August 1962, pp. 24-34, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[183] See for example: Yvonne Smith interview with Jodi Ellis, 29 September 1984; Hilda Smith interview with Jodi Ellis, 14 August 1984; Betty Oke interview with Jodi Ellis, 12 February 1985, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[184] Freda Brown interview with Suzanne Fabian, 17 February 1995, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[185] Minutes of Victorian Executive meeting with editorial board, 26 April 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

your child', described the event as both 'instructive and enjoyable'.[186] The organising of functions around elections included entertainment and speakers on subjects such as 'the importance of the women's vote', with designated groups making sandwiches and scones.[187] Suggestions for study classes on 'the role of the UAW' were received enthusiastically by local groups, demonstrating a reciprocal role in the ongoing politicisation of the UAW's rank and file.[188] These were women who facilitated their own political education, eager to participate in public life. The UAW's practice of carrying out political education and activity via baking, crafting and socialising was not merely a by-product of the gender of its leadership but calculated in order to appeal to its membership through familiarity and to forge solidarity. For example, in 1961, the Victorian Executive declared that groups were to be provided 'concrete leadership on activities for Solidarity Week', including suggestions for functions, the collection of relevant press clippings and the organisation of a film night.[189] Although the range of topics explored by UAW members with the direction of the leadership was broad, core areas of interests remained those aligned with CPA policy.

Living standards

Between 1950 and 1970 the UAW never deviated from the politicising of prices, a topic considered central to women and particularly housewives. The CPA routinely appealed to women through this line of rhetoric. In 1958, the Party asserted that: 'Housewives face a more and more difficult task as prices rise while wages drop further behind cost of living'.[190] A 1961 issue of *Our Women* declared that government money should be diverted from military expenditure, higher taxes should be collected from wealthy companies and shareholders and that prices should be controlled to help women struggling to meet the cost of living.[191] Whilst the 'groundwork' for politicisation occurred through socialising and domestic adjunct activity, the task of educating its members explicitly on a range of political topics required the use of research and propaganda dissemination. This strategy was most pronounced through information on foreign policy and industrial relations. These topics were invariably extended to include an economic analysis of the Menzies government's policies, which were viewed by the organisation as inseparable from 'standard of living' issues, such as inflation and social services. In a 1964 passage relating to 'work amongst women', the CPA noted that:

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[186] Report on 'Toys and Your Child', 12 October 1966, 1.8 Reports/papers, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[187] UAW Executive meeting (Vic), c.1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[188] UAW Management Committee meeting (Vic), 13 April 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[189] Minutes of Executive Meeting of the UAW (Vic), 29 March 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[190] *A Land of Plenty, Free from War,* April 1958, Resolution of 18th Congress, Item 2/5, Box 1, CPA Victoria State Committee, UMA.
[191] 'Make Canberra deeds fit Australia's needs', *Our Women,* October – December 1961, p. 10, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

> Campaigns of the labour movement will not be fully effective unless women are in support of them. In order to win more women to support working class struggles both for immediate gains and for socialism, all Party organisations must take part in welcoming our women comrades to gain education and to work in their mass organisation and among women in general.[192]

It is reasonable to conclude that the 'mass organisation' referred to was the UAW.[193] Indeed, educational literature and speakers at meetings and social functions were regular features of UAW activity. The organisation framed its politicisation process as having a 'responsibility to explain', to counter government propaganda about the inevitability of war and the cause of falling living standards and inflation.[194] The UAW declared that 'facts are weapons' in relation to high prices, imploring members to send information to the organising committee for use in educative literature.[195] A resolution of the 1960 Queensland AGM was to educate members on WIDF and the importance of the trade union movement to the women's movement.[196] This drive towards the full political education of women was explicitly expressed in *Our Women* in 1963:

> The important thing is for each and every woman to gain a deeper understanding of the world around us and everything in it. To learn to express her views, to seek to understand the views of others and to take a stand in defence of the right of all humankind to a peaceful and fuller life.[197]

The circulation of political ideas specifically aimed at women was important to the CPA in galvanising the working-class, but it was also a necessary response to similar actions by its opponents. Damousi has credited Prime Minister Menzies with instigating this new emphasis on campaigning separately for the 'women's vote' from the early 1940s. She cites a Gallup poll from 1950, indicating that women were preoccupied with the costs of feeding, clothing and educating their children as opposed to fighting communism. [198] However, conservative politicians and media outlets responded to concerns over the high cost of living by pointing to union demands for higher wages, drawing a

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[192] *Australia's Way Forward. Programme of the Communist Party of Australia and Agrarian Programme of the Communist Party of Australia.* Resolution for 20th Congress, Item 2/7, Box 1, CPA Victorian State Committee, UMA.
[193] Fabian and Loh, *Left-Wing Ladies,* 18; Curthoys and McDonald, *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade,* 7; Damousi, *Women Come Rally*, 152; Lake, *Getting Equal,* 210; 'Union of Australian Women', *Guardian,* 4 August 1950, p. 6.
[194] Secretary report – First Annual Conference, November 1951, p. 2, 1.8 Reports/papers, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[195] UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1950, p. 2, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[196] UAW Annual General Meeting (Qld), 26-29 October 1960, p. 2, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[197] 'Targets for today', *Our Women*, 10th Anniversary Issue 1963, p.29, 4.1.1, *Our Women*, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[198] Damousi, 'Women! Keep Australia free!', 91.

connection between women's domestic concerns and communist agitation.[199] In 1950, a 'UAW housewife' penned an article for *Guardian* expressing the 'indignation of working-class housewives over high prices', refuting the idea that higher wages meant higher prices, instead implicating 'Mr. Menzies' inflation'.[200]

The CPA and UAW shared the goal of raising living standards, with prices, social services and workers' rights repeatedly stated as key to this mission. UAW and CPA rhetoric on these issues was almost interchangeable. In 1962 the UAW declared: 'While wages were frozen, PROFITS WERE NOT! Big companies dominating large industries are able to manipulate prices and charge what they like'.[201] This sentiment echoes the CPA from 1958: 'While the workers' wages and conditions are attacked, the monopolies force prices up continually'.[202] These documents respectively criticise the effect of mechanisation and automation on working conditions and job security. Of course, Menzies and the left-wing of the labour movement were not the only interested parties promulgating narratives directed at women for political purposes. Election material from 1956, credited to the 'Australian Labor Party (Anti-Communist)' – later to become the Democratic Labor Party – reveals the dichotomous position presented to housewives on issues of living standards. Here, as in Liberal-Country Party rhetoric, it is the industrial agitation and undue influence of communist policies on the trade unions that are blamed for a range of issues contributing to 'falling living standards'.[203] Competing narratives around this topic demonstrate the increased incentive for the CPA to disseminate its point of view amongst working class women, particularly during the 1950s, when the labour movement was split into left and anti-communist factions fighting for hegemony among Australian workers.

The UAW and mainstream political parties

From its earliest iterations, the UAW took a hard line against the Menzies government, and the Prime Minister himself.[204] The Victorian branch took a similar approach to the Liberal-Country State government in the 1950s. During the 1951 electoral campaign, the UAW had raised the issue of maternity bed shortages, which it asserted 'reached a crisis while the Victorian Attorney General was declaring that every child be given a gun and taught to shoot.'[205] In November 1962, the Queensland

[199] See for example: 'Labour charged with aiding inflation', *The Age* (Vic), 4 April 1951, 3
[200] 'Not for us, thank you, Mrs Downing', *Guardian,* 6 October 1950, 6.
[201] 'An explanation to women wage and salary earners, 30 October 1962, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[202] *Australia's Path to Socialism. Programme,* 18th Congress, April 1958, Item 2/5, Box 1, CPA Victoria State Committee, UMA.
[203] 'Victorian Housewife' (leaflet), Anti-Communist Labor Party, 1955, Item 37, Box 7, CPA Victorian State Committee, UMA.
[204] UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1950, p. 2, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections; 'Women's union joins fight for peace, liberty', *Guardian,* 15 September 1950, 8.
[205] Annual report (Vic), 8 November 1951, p. 2, 1.4 Annual reports, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

branch of the UAW circulated a scathing document criticising specific actions by the Liberal-Country State government of Queensland. These included its denial of full Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander citizenship rights and the 'selling out' of the state-run Collinsville coalmine to private enterprise.[206] The document declared that the working class would never be allowed to prosper under its leadership. Of course, the UAW did not shy away from criticising the ALP when in Government or in Opposition either. The Tasmanian branch of the UAW released a strongly worded press statement criticising Labor Premier Eric Reece for his refusal to meet a UAW delegation wishing to discuss and present a petition on power increases in 1961.[207] During the campaign against the Communist Party Dissolution Bill in September 1950, *Guardian* reported in detail on events which unfolded during a UAW deputation to the Federal Members room of the ALP. Ailsa O'Connor, Victorian Secretary at the time, is paraphrased within the article as remarking to a Labor Party politician on his cowardice.[208]

Divisions within the ALP during the events which spawned the anti-communist Democratic Labor Party (DLP) in the mid-1950s and its aftermath, certainly produced a divisive and tense relationship between communist-associated organisations and the newly scarred ALP.[209] However, despite the mutual criticisms levelled between the ALP and the left wing of the labour movement, the Labor Party undeniably maintained policies more closely aligned with socialist values. This was highlighted at the beginning of the 1960s, when the UAW, in the company of the CPA and numerous trade unions, responded to the Menzies government's hostility by openly campaigning against its re-election. A key goal of the 19th Congress of the CPA in June 1961 was the defeat of the Menzies government.[210] The NSW branch of the UAW discussed the possibility of campaigning against the re-election of the Menzies government in April and by May had issued a letter to its members explaining the decision and the reasons for it.[211] In November the National Executive released a press statement declaring that it would 'campaign actively for the defeat of the [Menzies government's] return at the Federal Elections of December 9th'.[212] This was framed by the UAW as a significant departure for the organisation.

The UAW had always before advised its members to vote for the candidate who most closely aligned with its own policy.[213] Of course – with the exception of electorates running a communist candidate –

[206] UAW Annual meeting (Qld) report, November 1962, p. 1, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas and Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[207] UAW Tasmanian Section statement, 20 June 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas and Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[208] 'Women Tell ALP MP's Menzies' Bill Must not Pass', *Guardian*, 29 September 1950, 7.
[209] Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia,* 20.
[210] *The People Against Monopoly: 19th National Congress,* June 1961, Item 2/6, Box 1, CPA Victoria State Committee, UMA.
[211] 'Why is a change needed?' UAW NSW Branch, 2 May 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas and Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[212] UAW press statement, 1 November 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas and Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[213] Ibid.

this would almost certainly have been an indirect endorsement of the ALP candidate and a rejection of the conservative. The indirect outcome of campaigning 'actively' for the defeat of the sitting Federal Government, was likewise, the elevation of the opposition. The UAW explained to its members that the campaign was based on the Menzies government's repeated dismissal of UAW demands, consistent with its anti-working-class policies. Requests made by the UAW to the Menzies government including increases to social services and funding for health and education, equal pay and a peaceful foreign policy are cited as examples of Menzies' poor record of listening to the demands of working-class women.[214] Conversely, the document declared support for:

> …candidates of the labour movement who agree with this policy and are pledged to fight for – Full time jobs for all who want them; peace; equal pay for women; £1 child endowment for each child; control of prices; higher taxation of monopoly companies and the wealthy.[215]

Opposition leader Arthur Calwell delivered the ALP's policy speech on 16 November 1961, two weeks after the UAW released its press statement.[216] The first policy point addressed in Calwell's speech was 'world peace'. The opposition leader expressed the Labor Party's desire for world peace and declared its intention to work through the United Nations in achievement of this goal – with the caveat that in the event of world war, Australia would 'stand with the free world'. The ALP would support disarmament and the cessation of nuclear testing. Although the UAW would undoubtedly have perceived Calwell's comments regarding Australia's Cold War alliance with the 'free world' antithetical to its efforts towards 'peace and understanding between nations', the overall policy favoured its own. In contrast to the Prime Minister's comments during the Liberal-Country Party's policy unveiling, the ALP's deference to anti-communism appears inconsequential in comparison:

> Communist threats and aggression are more violent than at any other time since the war. The arrogance and wickedness of the recent Soviet nuclear and thermo-nuclear explosions has produced an atmosphere of crisis and danger.[217]

Equal pay was confirmed as official ALP policy and the UAW's call for 'full-time jobs for all who want them' was reflected in Calwell's promise to 'restore full employment within twelve months.' The ALP would legislate for £1 child endowment, but only for the third and subsequent children.

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[214] Ibid.
[215] UAW press statement, 1 November 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[216] Australian Federal Election Speeches, 'Arthur Calwell Australian Labor Party', November 16 1961, *Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House,* <electionspeeches.moadoph.gov.au/speeches/1961-arthur-calwell>.
[217] Australian Federal Election Speeches, 'Robert Menzies Liberal/Country Coalition', 15 November 1961 *Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House,* <electionspeeches moadoph.gov.au/speeches/1961-robert-menzies>.

Calwell did, however, declare the intention to increase both child endowment and maternity allowance in accordance with rising inflation since the current rates were set in 1950 and 1943 respectively. The final two items nominated by the UAW were addressed together under the ALP's taxation policy. Although Calwell did not explicitly promise price control, the Opposition leader's speech confirmed the ALP's belief in the need to stop the 'careening toboggan of inflation' that both it and the UAW attributed to the Federal Government. Labor would roll back sales taxes on basic necessities, including food to ease the burden on the 'family man' and revise taxation laws to favour low and middle-income earners instead of large monopolies. The ALP's 1961 election policy had numerous other aspects favourable to UAW aims. These included the mitigation of the consequences predicted to Australian trade by Britain's entry into the European Common Market, legislation to promote housing affordability and availability, repeal of the Crimes Act, additional social service increases, free public hospitals and measures to ease the 'crisis in education'.[218]

Prior to this indirect consensus between the UAW and the Labor Party, the latter regarded the UAW as a 'communist front', proscribing ALP women from joining throughout the 1950s. Freda Brown has recalled active measures taken by the Labor Party to ensure its members did not participate.[219] In an interview with ALP member and National President of the UAW in 1960, Lurline Simpson, Curthoys identifies the early 1960s as the beginning of improved relations between the organisations.[220] Despite Simpson recalling the proscription to be still in effect during 1960, she was allowed to continue her dual roles without repercussions. UAW records support this assessment. An unidentified local branch of the UAW received an invitation from the ALP to join a delegation concerned with inflation in April 1960.[221] Correspondence from August reveals that the UAW National Executive included the ALP Women's Central Organising Committee, along with mother's clubs and the Trades Hall Council, as potential signatories to a petition.[222] In March 1961, the UAW declared its intention to seek the support of the ALP Women's Central Organising Committee on a deputation to the French Consul regarding Algeria.[223] The UAW's anti-colonialist position precipitated a chain of correspondence which ultimately demonstrates the fragile and often inconsistent relationship between organisations at this time. Elements of the UAW viewed an overly critical approach to the ALP to be unproductive

[218] Australian Federal Election Speeches, 'Arthur Calwell Australian Labor Party', 16 November 1961, *Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House,* <electionspeeches.moadoph.gov.au/speeches/1961-arthur-calwell>.
[219] Freda Brown interview with Suzanne Fabian, 17 February 1995, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[220] Curthoys and McDonald, *More than a hat and glove brigade,* 30.
[221] Inter-branch correspondence from National Executive, 5 April 1960, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas and Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[222] Inter-branch correspondence from National Executive, 31 August 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas and Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[223] Correspondence from Victorian Branch to National Executive, 30 March 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas and Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

during the Federal Election campaign, owing to progress made with local Labor candidates. The Victorian Executive of the UAW expressed overt support for the ALP in the earlier State Elections:

> While we are under no illusions that an ALP Government can solve the questions facing Victoria, as an examination of their policy shows, nevertheless there are many points in the Victorian ALP policy which we can give support to, and several ALP candidates have indicated that they will support some of our demands, such as legislation on equal pay.[224]

Hilda Smith, writing for the Victorian Executive, went on to suggest that UAW members also holding membership of the ALP were actively attempting to win support from the ALP on other issues. This suggests that any proscription of the UAW in Victoria was either no longer in effect or was not taken seriously by the Labor Party. Although indicative of a growing mutual appreciation for the aims of each organisation, the situation to which Smith was responding demonstrates that some tensions still existed between the ALP and UAW. After the NSW Branch of the UAW sent Calwell a letter of protest over ALP policy on West Irian – one which would keep the region under Dutch rule until such time as the United Nations determined the indigenous inhabitants were 'fit to govern themselves' – the Labor leader responded to NSW Secretary Pat Elphinston, restating ALP policy and including criticism of the UAW's political advocacy of a communist policy:

> The only party that I know in Australia that would hand over Dutch New Guinea to the Indonesians is the Communist Party, and you know they do not represent the opinion of the Australian people because at most they never secure more than 2% of the votes of the Australian electorate.[225]

This terse exchange notwithstanding, ALP and UAW relations grew more positive throughout the 1960s. Queensland members, during the same 1962 meeting in which they declared political war on the Liberal/Country Coalition, praised Arthur Calwell, and actively endorsed his call for a nuclear free zone in the Southern Hemisphere.[226] An article appeared in *Our Women* later in the year expressing approval of the Labor Party's response to the UAW's August protest in Canberra, dubbed the 'cavalcade of peace'.[227] Despite the moniker, the main purpose of this protest delegation was to gain support for its 'Mother and Child' demands. Labor politicians were the only members of parliament who would see the women from the UAW and trade union women's groups, declaring support for

[224] Correspondence from Victorian Branch to National Executive, 9 June 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas and Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[225] Correspondence from Arthur Calwell to Pat Elphinston, 4 May 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas and Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[226] UAW Annual meeting (Qld) report, November 1962, p. 2, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas and Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[227] 'Canberra Cavalcade', *Our Women,* September-December 1962, p. 18, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

increases to Maternity Allowance and Child Endowment and agreeing to present the petition in Parliament.[228] In 1966 the UAW joined its voice to that of Federal Labor parliamentarians, demanding a referendum regarding price control.[229] A 1967 newsletter expressed approval on an ALP sponsored conference for working mothers.[230]

The UAW found common ground with the ALP through a shared enmity for the Menzies government and because the two organisations held similar ideas around economic and social governance. The main division between the Labor Party and the UAW during the 1950s stemmed not primarily from issues of policy, but the prevalence of anti-communism and the ALP's need to distance itself from association with socialist-appearing organisations. There is no doubt that the 1955 split within the Labor Party over communism supplied the Menzies government with ammunition against its political opponents throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s. However, as the 'McCarthyist era' receded with a new decade, so did the mistrust between the UAW and ALP. Although another Liberal-Country coalition government succeeded the Menzies administration in 1966, the UAW found room to cautiously praise its decisions during the late 1960s. For instance, in 1969 the UAW appeared optimistic about the Liberal-Country Federal Government's stance on conservation in the Great Barrier Reef, and jubilant over the Liberal-Country State Government's education reforms and lifting of restrictions on married teachers.[231] As Menzies' particular brand of conservatism, which found success in ideological polarisation and in the politicising and moralising of class divisions transitioned in the late 1960s, the UAW's politics were viewed as less radical by the standards of a changing society, whilst remaining fundamentally unchanged.

Conclusion

The defining characteristics of UAW activism are identified here as class, gender and politics. The 'political housewife', an alternate version of the iconic 1950s feminine ideal, has become the UAW's most prominent legacy within the history of women's labour activism. Indeed, the organisation promoted its members' domestic experience as a universal feature of the feminine condition holding the potential for a mass movement of women at every stage of political development. The 'political housewife', however, exemplifies the UAW as much as it exemplifies its urgent efforts to usher in a society populated by politically informed, financially independent and industrially militant women. Although the UAW did not challenge women's responsibility to home and family, it agitated for this

[228] Ibid.
[229] Annual Report, UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1966, p. 7, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[230] 17th Annual Report UAW (Vic), 14 October 1967, p. 6, 1.4 Annual reports, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[231] UAW Newsletter (Vic), June 1969, p. 3; May 1969, p. 2, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

responsibility to be seen by society in the context of full citizenship and public inclusion. The right to work under equal conditions and for equal remuneration was fundamental to the change it sought.

The UAW aimed to stir in a working-class woman a sense of righteous empathy, a concern for her class as a whole, regardless of her individual role within the economic system. As has been demonstrated in this chapter, the recruitment and retention of working women members was a frustrating task for the UAW throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The close ties between the UAW and the CPA underscores the reasons behind the UAW's tenacity in pursuing the elusive 'working woman' and in addressing her problems regardless of her participation. Communist doctrine instructed that women's emancipation would be won through class struggle and solidarity with their male comrades. The UAW's commitment to socialism and the Communist Party canon is implicitly shown through its unwavering synergy with Party policy and political rhetoric. In some ways, the question of autonomy is rendered largely inconsequential by the UAW's obvious loyalty to and agreement with Communist Party policy.

The dominance of Party women within the upper echelons of the organisation does not negate their genuine belief in the importance of the UAW's work on behalf of working-class women. The UAW's ability to argue the interests of this too-often ignored demographic were frequently frustrated by the ambivalence of mainstream politicians and an unsympathetic media. However, the UAW's capacity to engage the ALP in dialogue and court cooperation suggests that the organisation was seen to hold some sway among Labor's voting base. The UAW's commitment to politicising Australian women in their own interests and the interests of their class has been confirmed by former members as fundamental to the UAW's mission. The next chapter will further examine the ways in which the UAW attempted to achieve this, through an examination of its place within the wider labour movement and its relationship to trade union women's organisations.

Chapter Three

Infiltration through Solidarity: The UAW and Gender Equality within the Trade Union Movement

When I first met Lily the ease was clear,
And I talked of her in my sleep.
I called her 'precious', I called her 'dear',
But the boss considered her 'cheap'.[1]

Introduction

Chapter Two establishes that the UAW was an organisation comprised of housewives, but that its primary mission was to enable women's inclusion into paid work and the labour movement. The New Housewives' Association (NHA) had been deemed 'too narrow' in its singular appeal to 'housewives' by members of the Communist Party by 1950.[2] The gradual eroding of women's war-time wages and conditions epitomised the low standing working women were afforded by politicians and employers. The CPA perceived this lack of standing as a handicap for the working class in maintaining strength through solidarity.[3] The Party also lamented its inability to appeal to significant numbers of women. Communists predicted that women's collective political consciousness would develop favourably to socialism through experience in the workplace and industrial activism.[4] The task of integrating women into the trade union movement fell to the newly formed UAW.[5] A major task for the UAW was to include and mobilise non-working women in industrial activism. The large number of women engaged in unpaid domestic labour required the UAW to work often in an auxiliary capacity and with auxiliary women's organisations. The UAW denied auxiliary status itself, however, preferring to frame this work as the facilitation of women's involvement in the labour movement.[6]

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[1] 'Me and Lil', *Our Women,* March-May 1962, p. 20, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[2] Curthoys and McDonald, *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade,* 47.
[3] Communist Party Policy for Women, c. early 1960s, p. 17, Item 11/4 1976:0028, Box 3, CPA Victoria State Committee, UMA.
[4] Ibid, 1-18; *Australia's Way Forward. Programme of the Communist Party of Australia and Agrarian Programme of the Communist Party of Australia.* Resolution for 20th Congress, Item 2/7, Box 1, CPA Victorian State Committee, UMA; Report on UAW National Committee Meeting, 18 February 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU.
[5] NAA: A6122/16, 1174, report, 'C. P. of A. Women's Cadres' Meeting', 19 June 1956, pp. 2-6.
[6] *Victorian Section, Union of Australian Women, 1950-1970*, c. early 1970s, p. 2, 6.2.1 Vic Section UAW 1950-1970, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

The cultural expectations relating to gender roles during the 1950s and 1960s are significant to the UAW's efforts to permeate the trade union movement on behalf of women. Zelda D'Aprano and others have documented the machismo permeating unions during this time.[7] Whilst the Communist Party sought the inclusion of women within the trade union movement, it treated this as a problem ultimately to be solved by women. By forming specialist classes and organisations targeting and run by women, the Party took the view that this was an area of development dependant on women's political education.[8] The UAW sought to fulfil this mandate in a number of ways. The organisation aimed not only to familiarise and educate women on trade union activities, but also to familiarise and educate trade unionists on the value of including women workers. Despite the CPA's characterisation of working-class women as politically uneducated in comparison to their industrially experienced male counterparts, male workers would need to be relieved of their preconceptions about women's role in order to effect cultural change within trade unions and entice women workers into union activity. Encouraging women to join their unions was another key aim of the UAW in pursuing workplace equality, in addition to promoting issues specific to women workers within trade unions.[9]

This chapter will discuss the ways in which these aims were pursued within three key areas. The first section will explore the UAW's relationship to trade union women's auxiliaries.[10] These organisations were pivotal in connecting working class housewives to industrial activism. Further, the UAW's affiliations to trade union women's organisations provided recognition and the opportunity for reciprocity within the trade union movement. The next section will examine the UAW's efforts to infiltrate the trade union movement from within industry. Despite the comparatively small number of UAW members active in the workplace, this was a vital component of the UAW's struggle for women's equality. The final section of this chapter will investigate the UAW's contributions to public political discourse through an exploration of the campaign for equal pay and women's rights at work.

Was the UAW an auxiliary?

In an in-house history, circa 1970, the UAW asserted:

> At first unions hailed us as a handy workforce to prepare food and assist in their social functions. We had to state emphatically that we are an organisation in our own right, not an auxiliary.[11]

[7] Zelda D'Aprano, *Zelda,* (North Geelong: Spinifex Press, 2002), 110.
[8] NAA: A6119, 6007, report, 'Communist Party of Australia Women's Class, Gippsland', 13 July 1963; Communist Party Policy for Women, p. 18 Item 11/4 1976:0028, Box 3, CPA Victoria State Committee, UMA.
[9] UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1966, p. 11, 4.2.1, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[10] A note on terminology: The UAW was affiliated to trade union women's 'committees' and 'auxiliaries.' Functionally, these organisations performed the same duties as each other and were populated by non-working women attached to a male trade unionist.
[11] *Victorian Section, Union of Australian Women, 1950-1970*, c. early 1970s, p. 2, 6.2.1 Vic Section UAW 1950-1970, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

The UAW has been identified here as a communist-affiliated organisation with conditional autonomy. Semantically, the UAW's status as a subordinate offshoot of the Communist Party gives some credence to the description of the UAW as a kind of women's auxiliary to the CPA. However, the scope of its activities surpassed those of traditional women's auxiliaries and included women and children as the primary beneficiaries of its activism. This indicates a departure from the 'supportive' work commonly undertaken by auxiliary organisations. Conversely, Fabian and Loh describe the UAW's formative agenda as focused on 'women in the home, as auxiliaries to the changemakers'.[12] The authors elaborate on this perspective by highlighting the UAW's initial focus on women as mothers, as opposed to wage earners. In 1963, UAW member Enid Hampson described the UAW as a 'forward movement of all things concerning women and children'.[13] This emphasis places UAW activism in the context of the family unit. During the 1950s and 1960s, the phrase 'women and children' most commonly described dependants of a male breadwinner. However, the idea that approaching activism from the perspective of women's lived experience automatically characterises that activism as 'auxiliary' invalidates women's agency and reduces their historical experience to that of secondary. This characterisation also overlooks the calculated efforts of the UAW to appeal to housewives and mothers in order to achieve a more equal status in society. The UAW aimed to attract working women and housewives alike, and by necessity, dealt with its members' circumstances pragmatically.

'Helpmate' activism was indicative of women's subordinate and dependant status, but also of their drive to contribute their energy and experience outside the home. Damousi has pointed out that historically, the supportive work undertaken by women in aid of socialist causes was deemed secondary to the political work carried out by men.[14] The activities undertaken by trade union women's auxiliaries were, by definition, secondary to those of their umbrella organisations. However, the UAW presented publicly as independent. Although it provided opportunity for women to assist campaigns in an auxiliary capacity, this was only one component of its activism.[15] The assumptions about the UAW described in the opening quote of this section, indicate the entrenched societal notions constituting 'women's work' during the 1950s. This prevalent attitude was a major challenge for the UAW to overcome in its goal of infiltrating the trade union movement. By encouraging the formation of new women's auxiliaries and affiliating to these and existing organisations, the UAW influenced women towards industrially based activism and demonstrated the benefits of embracing women as

[12] Fabian and Loh, *Left Wing Ladies,* 24.
[13] NAA: A6119, 6007, Report on the Third National Conference of the UAW, 'Union of Australian Women', 10 December 1963, p. 4.
[14] Damousi, *Women Come Rally*, 35.
[15] NAA: A6122/16, 1174, copy of CPA document obtained by ASIO in 1953, 'Build the Union of Australian Women', February 1953, p. 2.

allies to male unionists.[16] For the UAW's communist leadership, introducing housewives to political activism and industrial issues serviced the first step in the activation of women in class struggle.

The direction offered by the Communist Party did not include the expectation that UAW members perform auxiliary duties for the CPA or other organisations within the labour movement.[17] However, the Party did dictate that the UAW 'must follow all trade union demands', in addition to similar decrees implying that the UAW's status was subordinate within the labour movement.[18] Although the CPA created strict guidelines to govern the UAW's organisational conduct, its control was complicated by contradictory expectations. Rules set out by the Party in 1956 detailing strategy, structure, campaign content and overall agenda also included the stipulation that the UAW must self-determine in order to create mass appeal. The CPA hoped the UAW would eventually reach membership numbers approaching two million, a figure suggesting that the CPA certainly did not view the UAW as an auxiliary, despite its paternalistic attitude. The 'women cadres' of the CPA were instructed to organise the 'wives of workers' towards activity promoting peace, prices and the rights of women and children, suggesting an adherence to 'separate spheres' of activism between the sexes. However, the Party further dictated that the UAW give special attention to women workers, who would ideally form the 'core of the movement'.[19]

In 1963, ASIO speculated that Freda Brown, then National Secretary of the UAW, was poised for membership on a suspected CPA Central Committee 'Women's Sub-committee'. Other potential members were listed as UAW office bearers Noreen Hewett, Alice Hughes, Enid Hampson and Zara Rae Splayford.[20] If ASIO's information was correct, all of the women nominated for this sub-committee were also influential members of the UAW. In her role teaching CPA women's classes, Noreen Hewett emphasised that 'mass campaigns are necessary to draw women into the trade union movement'.[21] Hewett was the editor of *Our Women* and was herself a prominent member of the NSW Miners' Women's Auxiliaries. The central role that women like Brown, Hewett, Hughes and Hampson played as leaders and architects in the CPA's 'work amongst women', lends credence to the description of the UAW as a 'communist front' organisation, but not an auxiliary. If the UAW was appointed as a primary voice for women within the labour movement, it nonetheless placed a high value on the role of trade union women's organisations as a strategic precursor to trade union participation.

Building women's class solidarity

[16] Ibid.
[17] NAA: A6122/16, 1174, report, 'C. P. of A. Women's Cadres' Meeting', 19 June 1956, pp. 1-6.
[18] NAA: A6122/16, 1174, report, 'C. P. of A. Women's Cadres' Meeting', 19 June 1956, p. 2.
[19] NAA: A6122/16, 1174, report, 'C. P. of A. Women's Cadres' Meeting', 19 June 1956, p. 1.
[20] NAA: A6119, 6007, report, 'Communist Party of Australia Central Committee. Women's Sub-committee', 14 September 1964.
[21] NAA: A6119, 6007, report, 'CPA Women's Class – Gippsland', 30 July 1963.

In 1951, the UAW declared:

> …[T]he Union of Australian Women recognises the need for a wide variety of activities and of organisational forms, to serve the needs and interests of women, including those who may not yet be ready to join the Union of Australian Women. These activities etc. should be organised on a street, local, factory or union basis.[22]

Although the UAW aimed to grow as an organisation, it often prioritised the activation of women in the broader labour movement over their recruitment into the UAW. This was both practical and political. The Communist Party made clear to the women cadres of the UAW that they were ultimately expected to show loyalty to the Party over the UAW.[23] As implied in the above quote, the UAW was aware that it could have an influence with working class women outside of its organisation.[24] The UAW found avenues for housewives and women workers, uncomfortable with a high level of political activity, to contribute to the labour movement. In 1964, UAW campaigns undertaken explicitly 'on behalf of women and children' were listed as child endowment, cost of living, prices and safety concerns stemming from a lack of security at unmanned railway stations.[25] These issues were likely thought to have widespread appeal to mothers and housewives. In 1963, the UAW successfully lobbied the City of Bankstown for a new drain, after leading a campaign 'supported by local women'.[26] This 'community engagement' served as a stepping stone to future participation and politicisation, targeting women concerned with local issues and those affecting their families directly. Of course, the phrasing 'not yet ready' for UAW membership suggests that the 'wide array of activities' were intended to entice women on the periphery into the UAW eventually.

The functions and activities organised by local UAW groups and State Committees allowed the UAW to present political education as less intimidating and foreign to the uninitiated. A document detailing the UAW's 'Mother and Child' campaign describes its origins as a group of women 'chatting over a cup of tea', discussing the difficulties of budgeting for their children on a single income and the meagre child endowment they received.[27] The apparent initiation of a large-scale, long-term campaign during a moment of casual social interaction is characteristic of the UAW's drive to represent the views of ordinary working-class women. Australian ideas around class solidarity are most often associated with exclusionary, phallocentric concepts such as 'mateship', rife within the trade union

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[22] 'Build the Union of Australian Women', c. 1951, p. 1, 1.8 Reports/papers, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[23] NAA: A6122/44, 1448, report, [title unknown], sub-section (b) of report titled 'James Laurence Moss', dated September 1959, p. 3 (Jim Moss was the State Secretary of the SA branch of the CPA); NAA: A1622/16, 1174, report, 'C. P. of A. Women's Cadres' Meeting', pp. 1-6.
[24] Ibid; 'Build the Union of Australian Women', c. 1951, p. 1, 1.8 Reports/papers, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[25] UAW Newsletter (Vic), November 1964, p. 7, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[26] 'Busy Bees in Bankstown', *Our Women,* Anniversary Issue, 1963, p. 33, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[27] Untitled document, c. 1959, 5.4 Child Endowment, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

movement.[28] However, within the UAW friendship and common connections between women formed a type of solidarity specific to women's experience. This solidarity between women was of course, present within trade union women's organisations and was espoused by the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), to which the UAW looked for inspiration. This blend of class and gender solidarity united politically minded women to action, but the larger task for the UAW was to dismantle the notion of 'separate spheres' between working class men and women. In 1951 the UAW urged its members to adopt this mindset:

> The trade unions need our co-operation, just as we need theirs, and if they are slow to come forward, we should take the initiative and suggest forms of joint action. This is not time to wait to be asked, or for men and women to be kept apart organisationally.[29]

Whilst housewives engaged in domestic labour could not join a trade union, they could join a women's organisation attached to their spouses' union. Though this arrangement did not quite merge the 'separate spheres' of male workers and their wives, it brought them within reach.

The UAW's ties to women's auxiliary groups, like many aspects of UAW activity, served a dual purpose. In terms of the UAW's 'big picture', auxiliary activism was viewed as a crucial step in women's political development and integration into trade unionism. However, in the interim auxiliary activism was also a way for women to advocate for themselves economically. The advocacy of women and children was the explicit motivation of the UAW and it was likely that most members understood this to be its primary goal.[30] The UAW emphasised the importance of organising unionists' 'womenfolk' during strikes, collecting 'relief' and providing support through social, cultural and sporting activities for strikers and their families.[31] In 1950, the Victorian branch of the UAW stressed the need to support metal trades employees who had been striking for ten weeks. It was reported that the UAW did so by collecting donations and argued that the success of the strikers' claim for a wage increase would be relevant to thousands of women whose husbands and breadwinners worked in the metal trades.[32]

The UAW consistently pointed out the responsibility of women to support their spouse's industrial claims for the benefit of their families and themselves. *Our Women* amplified this message in its reporting. Indicative was an article tracing UAW member Pam Young's tour of Queensland: 'Women

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[28] Miriam Dixson, *The Real Matilda. Woman and Identity in Australia 1788 to 1975* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1976), 37; Nick Dyrenfurth, *Mateship: A Very Australian History* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2015), 121-2.
[29] Secretary Report, First Annual Conference, November 1951, pp. 2-3, 1.8 Reports/papers, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[30] See for example: Enid Hampson's comments: NAA: A6119, 6007, report, Union of Australian Women, 10 December 1963, p. 4.
[31] 'Build the Union of Australian Women', c. 1951, p. 2, 1.8 Reports/papers, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[32] UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1950, p. 3, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

told me how they had resented their husband's attendance at union meetings until the men had explained how union organisation had safeguarded and improved the life of families.'[33] This focus on women's economic dependence through their familial role was consistent with the outlook of trade union women's organisations. The Waterside Workers' Women's Committee described financial penalties against blue collar workers for asserting their rights as 'cruel laws against wharfies' families'.[34] The Northern Miners' Women's Auxiliaries similarly pleaded in the economic interests of their families: 'We, the wives, sweethearts and mothers of mineworkers, appeal to the women of Australia to understand and help us and our menfolk who are losing their jobs.'[35]

The UAW took advantage of its ties to trade union women's organisations to increase the impact of its relatively small voice, whilst continuing the process of politicisation. In 1954, UAW members were instructed to request that Seamens' and Waterside Workers' women act to express concern for the recently orphaned Rosenberg children following their parents' execution for conspiracy to commit Soviet espionage in the United States.[36] This call was taken up by the Seamen's Women's Committee, which became involved in correspondence with American authorities about the children's care.[37] The UAW capitalised on the shared experience of motherhood to gain assistance for this and other campaigns. Accepting responsibility for the wellbeing of children was an expectation rooted in women's domestic subordination, but also speaks to the role maternalist discourse played in uniting women in political action prior to the 1970s.[38]

Promoting 'motherhood' as a motivator was an effective way to unite housewives in support of aims like peace and better funding for education.[39] In this way the UAW aimed to broaden the focus of trade union women's organisations. In 1950, 'wharfie's wives' associated with the UAW were encouraged to approach other waterside workers' wives in the hope of forming a new UAW group. Activities to support their trade unionist husbands were then to be widened to issues affecting families and children, like the protesting of prices and the sale of war-toys. Also on the agenda, however, were purely political issues such as the defeat of the 'anti-red bill' (Communist Party Dissolution Act).[40] Through providing the opportunity for housewives to collaborate on progressively complex political

[33] Pam Young, 'Tropic Tour', *Our Women,* Anniversary Issue 1963, p. 34, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[34] Joyce O'Brien, 'Cruel Laws against Wharfies' Families', *Our Women,* June-August 1963, p. 15, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[35] Pamphlet, 'To the women of Australia', issued by the Northern Miners' Women's Auxiliaries, [N.D], z236, Box 4, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[36] Minutes of Executive Meeting, NSW branch, 6 January 1954, p. 1, z236, box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[37] Minutes of UAW Management Committee Meeting (NSW), 27 January 1954, p. 1, z236, box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[38] Simic, 'Butter not Bombs', 07.5.
[39] See for example: 'Peace and disarmament', Resolutions from Second National Conference, 27 May-2 June 1962, p. 1, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[40] UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1950, p. 2, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

issues, the UAW built on maternalism to increase class solidarity outside of shared domestic experience.

Trade union women's organisations: a way in?

In 1963 *Our Women* quoted the secretary of the Brisbane Metal Trades Women's Committee:

> The trade union women's committees must not be seen as mere lunch getters and tea makers. They must be the means of bringing the women better understanding of the role of the trade unions in our country.[41]

The UAW affirmed this interpretation of the role of trade union women's committees through frequent articles in *Our Women* and dialogue within the organisation.[42] The UAW acknowledged that the primary role of trade union women's committees was to support the industrial demands of their 'menfolk', but listed additional functions as socialising, caring for sick members, raising funds, organising children's entertainment and participating in International Women's Day (IWD) and May Day celebrations.[43] These activities constitute traditional 'women's work' in much the same way as 'getting lunch' and 'making tea', but the UAW placed value on this work in as much as it represented experience and potential.

Of course, trade union women's committees were also selectively active in socialist politics and industrial activism. In 1958 the NSW State Executive of the CPA wrote to communist members of the Miners' Women's Auxiliaries to call a fraction meeting prior to its National Conference. The letter informed members that Noreen Hewett would lead a discussion on work in the auxiliaries and 'future perspectives' on the direction of that work.[44] The Communist Party clearly exerted influence within trade union women's organisations, apart from that wielded through the UAW. However, the UAW was intended to function as a bridging organisation – between women's organisations and between women in the home and industry.[45] Connecting to trade union women's committees allowed the UAW access and influence over a greater number of working-class women and crucially, the opportunity to edge closer to the heart of the labour movement, the trade unions.

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[41] Elfrida Morcom, 'The Women were with us too', *Our Women,* Anniversary Issue, 1963, p. 24, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[42] See for example: Elfrida Morcom, 'The women were with us too', 24; Report of National Secretary to National Committee Meeting, 17 February 1961, p. 4, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[43] Elfrida Morcom, 'The Women were with us too', *Our Women,* Anniversary Issue, 1963, p. 22, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[44] NAA: A6119, 6007, copy of a letter from the NSW State Executive of the CPA to communist attendees of the Miners Women's Auxiliaries National Conference, 'Communist Party of Australia. Miners' Women's Auxiliaries, 10 November 1958.
[45] NAA: A6122/16, 1174 , report, 'C. P. of A. Women's Cadres' Meeting', pp. 1-6.

In her address to the Third National Conference of the UAW in 1963, Freda Brown positioned the UAW as an internationally active organisation allied to the labour movement. Brown then remarked upon the importance of trade union women's organisations to the work of the UAW.[46] There can be little doubt that the UAW was strengthened, both in numbers and influence, by its association with trade union women's organisations. In 1961 National Secretary Pat Elphinston declared as much, but also stated that the ties between the UAW and its affiliates (identified in this report exclusively as trade union women's organisations) were insufficiently close. Elphinston reasoned that a more intimate relationship between the UAW and its affiliates would allow more effective participation in working class struggles, given the proximity of trade union women's organisations to big industrial unions.[47] In 1962 the Queensland UAW declared: 'The unity of UAW and Trade Union Women's Committees is of utmost importance to further strengthening the progressive women's movement and uniting more closely to Trade Unions.'[48] From these statements, it is clear that a large part of the UAW's purpose in connecting to trade union women's organisations was to ingratiate itself into the trade union movement. Elfrida Morcom's 1963 article in *Our Women* claimed that 'most [trade union women's] committees are affiliated to the UAW and through it the Women's International Democratic Federation.'[49] Like details regarding the exact make up of UAW branches, it is difficult to definitively substantiate the author's claim of near universal affiliation between the UAW and trade union women's organisations. However, the available evidence suggests that these connections were numerous and close.

The National branch and the Victorian branch were most closely affiliated with the Seamen's and Waterside Workers women's committees and the Miners' Women's Auxiliaries. Meg Arrowsmith credited trade union women's committees' with 'assistance and support' through the breadth of UAW campaigns and activities in Victoria.[50] The National Committee of the UAW included members from trade union women's organisations, notably Rita Jameson, representing the Waterside Workers' Women's Committee and Agnes Doig from the Miners' Women's Auxiliaries.[51] The Third National Conference of the UAW officially included fifteen individuals from eight trade union women's organisations, representing Victoria, NSW, Queensland and Western Australia.[52] It was routine for

[46] NAA: A6119, 6007, Report on Third National Conference of UAW, 'Union of Australian Women', 10 December 1963, p. 2.
[47] Report of National Secretary to National Committee Meeting, 17 February 1961, p. 4, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[48] UAW Annual Meeting (Qld), November 1962, p. 3, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[49] Elfrida Morcom, 'The Women were with us too', *Our Women,* Anniversary Issue, 1963, p. 24, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[50] NAA: A6119, 6007, Report on Third National Conference of UAW, 'Union of Australian Women', 10 December 1963, p. 6.
[51] UAW Newsletter (Vic), May 1965', p. 3, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[52] NAA: A6122/44, 1622, report, 'Union of Australian Women Third National Conference', 15 November 1963, p. 6.

representatives from trade union women's committees to attend UAW management committee meetings, and vice versa.[53] In New South Wales, these included women's committees attached to the Seamen's Union, the Waterside Workers Union and the Building Workers' Industrial Union (BWIU).[54] Queensland fostered the strongest ties to trade union women's organisations. In 1963 it was reported that the Queensland UAW had been involved in setting up four Miners' Women's Auxiliaries and three Waterside Workers Women's Committees. The Queensland branch reported participation in Trades and Labour councils and affiliation to Metal Trades Women's Committees, Seamen's Women's Committees, BWIU Women's Committees and a Boilermakers Women's Committee.[55] Trade union women's committees were also reported to have formed UAW branches, in order to broaden their activities.[56] In 1964, it was reported that the South Australian branch of the UAW was affiliated to 14 non-specified trade union women's committees.[57] These connections, in addition to the UAW's work on mutual campaigns with trade union women's organisations, confirm that the UAW's rhetoric around this area was matched by action.

Although the UAW positioned itself as a catalyst for women's political and social growth among working class housewives, it also realised the reciprocal nature of its relationship to trade union women's committees.[58] The UAW was careful to acknowledge the prior legacy built by trade union women's organisations, particularly the Miners' Women's Auxiliaries identified as the 'first organisation of its kind in Australia'.[59] *Our Women* dedicated a section to the 'news and views of the trade union women's committees', which detailed the activities and collaborative efforts between these organisations and the UAW.[60] Trade union women's committees were particularly active on issues like unemployment and joined the UAW in deputations and 'cavalcades' in the pursuit of increased social services during the 'Mother and Child' campaign.[61] In addition to increased support, affiliation to trade union women's organisations connected the UAW to a longer national history of radical action by working class women. This historic legacy was utilised within UAW propaganda. In closing her history of trade union women's committees for *Our Women*, Elfrida Morcom lambasted

[53] Correspondence between Seamen's Women's Committee and Victorian branch of UAW, 5 February 1962, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[54] NAA: A6119, 6007, report, 'Meeting of the Management Committee, 2 December 1964', 23 December 1964.
[55] NAA: A6119, 6007, report, Third National Conference of the Union of Australian Women, 10 December 1963, 6.
[56] NAA: A6122/16, 1180, copy of article titled 'Helped fight Menzies; Set up a UAW branch', publication not specified [nd].
[57] NAA: A6119, 6007, report, National Committee Meeting, 31 October – 1 November 1964, 'National Committee Union of Australian Women', 16 November 1964.
[58] Report of National Secretary to National Committee Meeting, 17 February 1961, p. 4, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[59] Elfrida Morcom, 'The women were with us too', *Our Women,* Anniversary Issue, 1963, p. 24, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[60] 'News and views', *Our Women,* March-May 1962, p. 16, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[61] 'Trade union women's committees'; 'Canberra Cavalcade', *Our Women,* September-December 1962, pp. 14-18, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

author Norman MacKenzie for his failure to acknowledge the importance of women's auxiliaries in his 1962 book, *Women in Australia.* Morcom wrote:

> Norman Mackenzie has written about us at length, reduced us to statistics and commented on our way of life but he does not understand that it is such organisations of the working class which will play a decisive part in our future history.[62]

The UAW's aim to broaden the scope of trade union women's organisations seems to have achieved some success. The increased involvement of trade union women's committees in UAW campaigns and the testimonies of various women's committee members affirm this conclusion.[63] The secretary of the Townsville Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) women's committee credited the UAW with broadening the scope of its activities, to include issues such as the development of women's rights in Australia.[64] Reporting in *Our Women* paints a picture of competence and determination in the description of women's auxiliary activities in trade union activism, including decisive action on issues affecting the wider communities of strikers and their families.[65] The UAW displayed confidence that through auxiliary activity, working class women would advance their own economic interests, develop politically and foster class solidarity with the men in their lives. However, the UAW's primary objective in its affiliation to trade union women's committees was to infiltrate the trade union movement. Ultimately, the UAW intended to turn breadwinners into comrades.

The challenges of infiltration: women workers and the trade union movement

To facilitate the inclusion of women into trade unions, the UAW necessarily sought influence over women workers. The organisation's intended means of doing so was to recruit women workers into its own ranks. As discussed in Chapter Two, this strategy did not produce significant numerical success. In 1951, however, the UAW was still optimistic, declaring that 'active support for the needs of working women including their struggles for equal pay, better working conditions and security of employment' had contributed to the successful growth of the organisation.[66] The same document declared that the UAW aimed to organise working women 'in particular', pointing out that these women 'bore the brunt' of the Menzies government's economic policies.[67] The UAW identified several areas preventing working women from becoming politically active. The difficulties faced by women owing to their domestic expectations in addition to fulltime employment has been discussed

[62] Morcom, 'The women were with us too', *Our Women,* p. 24, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[63] Murray and Peetz, *Women of the Coal Rushes,* 289.
[64] Morcom, 'The women were with us too', 24.
[65] 'Mt. Isa Women in Action', *Our Women,* June-August 1962, p. 14, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[66] Build the Union of Australian Women, c. 1951, p. 3, 1.8 Reports/papers, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[67] Ibid.

here and elsewhere. Compared to more complex issues like systemic discrimination, political apathy or gendered social conditioning, the solution to this problem was theoretically simple. From a 1956 special issue of *Every Woman*:

> Many working women are in our organisation, but many more would join us providing we are able to tell them of our UAW, and to provide something of special interest to them; for example, activities which will suit the limited leisure time of our working women, and also articles in OUR WOMEN on matters affecting them.[68]

The UAW attempted to mitigate scheduling difficulties for working women with dependents by holding meetings at night and rotating suburban locations. The UAW further provided entertainment, refreshments and the promise of enjoyable social interactions.[69] While these efforts did contribute to the growth of 'working women's groups' within the organisation (discussed below), they did not address the deeply ingrained cultural norms preventing women from participation in public life. Far from being oblivious to this situation, the UAW internally expressed concern at what it perceived as the widespread ignorance and isolation of women workers, who had little chance of improving their own pay and conditions unaided.[70]

The language used by the UAW to describe women workers within its public literature was inclusive and positive, but in-house reporting often framed women workers as uneducated, and in need of – yet unreceptive to – the knowledge that would win their emancipation. In 1961 the UAW National Committee was told that working women needed the UAW, as most were simply not 'sufficiently union conscious' to advocate in their own interests.[71] UAW members were encouraged to educate and instruct women workers.[72] Systemic discrimination was a topic paramount within CPA and UAW discourse surrounding women workers but manifested as frustratingly tautological – challenging their subordinate status required women to act but acceptance of that same status discouraged many women from doing so.[73] The UAW's assessment of the political literacy of working women is consistent with its mission of politicisation, but inconsistent with the idea that women in industry would form the

[68] 'Professional and Industrial Women', *Every Woman Special Issue.* Annual Report 1956, p. 7, z236 box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[69] See for example: Annual Report, UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1966, p. 3, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[70] Report on World Conference of Women, 1953, presented to Annual Meeting, 1954, p. 2, z236, box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU; Report of National Secretary to National Committee Meeting, 17 February 1961, p. 4, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[71] Report of National Secretary to National Committee Meeting, 17 February 1961, p. 4, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[72] UAW Newsletter (Vic), November 1964, p. 6, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[73] The CPA addresses the systemic discrimination of women in its Policy for Women: Communist Party Policy for Women, c. early 1960s, Item 11/4 1976:0028, Box 3, CPA Victoria State Committee, University of Melbourne Archives (UMA).

vanguard of the movement.[74] In practice it was the women cadres of the CPA who formed the vanguard of the progressive women's movement in the 1950s – whether employed or not.

The CPA attributed women's marginalisation within the trade union movement to 'right-wing labour leaders and reformist trade union officials', in addition to opportunistic employers with a financial stake in dividing the working class.[75] It urged trade unions to take up gendered issues in its 'Policy for Women'. However, the Party largely framed sex discrimination as a women's collective problem to overcome. This latter perspective was shared by prominent trade union leaders.[76] Sheridan and Stretton contend that many unions 'went through the motions' of advocating for women in the workplace during the 1950s and 1960s, while overtly favouring policies which prioritised male workers' job security and superior wages.[77] However, trade union representatives who engaged with the UAW were quick to assert that many women did enjoy membership of trade unions, to their benefit.[78] Of course, the prevalence of political apathy among women workers was not universal.[79] Many wage-earning women pursued industrial action throughout the period; however, the trade union movement as a whole was yet to prioritise gender equality or gender specific issues, despite some progressive influence.[80] Rea notes that women's apparent lack of enthusiasm for trade union activities was pointedly absent in succeeding decades and suggests that the overwhelmingly male perspective of most unions, and not women's apathy, was the major factor in women's exclusion prior to the 1970s and 1980s.[81] It is likely that no single factor kept women from mass involvement in union activity, rather a confluence of socio-cultural influences on both women workers and those labour organisations that were tardy in promoting women's rights.

The UAW did not publicly or explicitly consider the masculine culture of trade unions as a possible deterrent for women workers regarding union participation. However, the organisation offered support to women workers whose unions did not embrace policies to protect them. In 1953 the UAW entered into correspondence with the Meatworkers' Union over its apparent reluctance to advocate for the rights of married women workers – presumably pertaining to the principle of seniority which held that workers would be afforded a higher standing and, crucially, job security based upon the longevity of

[74] NAA: A6122/16, 1174, report, 'C. P. of A. Women's Cadres' Meeting', p. 1.
[75] Communist Party Policy for Women, p. 17, , Item 11/4 1976:0028, Box 3, CPA Victorian State Committee, UMA.
[76] Tom Sherridan and Pat Stretton, 'Pragmatic Procrastination: Governments, Unions and Equal Pay, 1949-68', *Labour History,* 94 (May 2008): 133-156 at 137.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Frank Bollins, 'Working Women and Trade Unions', *Our Women,* March-May 1961, p. 28, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[79] For example, women workers in Brisbane successfully struck for the implementation of a fully unionised workplace in 1962; 'One Strike in 30 Years – For 100 per cent Union Shop', *Our Women,* June-August 1962, p. 7, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[80] See for example: D'Aprano, *Zelda,* 110-115.
[81] Jeannie Rea, 'Women and Trade Unions: Do Women need Unions or Unions need Women?', *Social Alternatives*, 24/2, (2005), 50-54 at 50.

their employment compared to that of other employees, commonly denied to married women under the assumptions inherent in the family wage system. The Meatworkers' Union was urged to promote equal treatment for married women to its membership.[82]

The UAW advocated measures to support women workers while attempting to foster a sense of common purpose with trade unionists. Issues specific to women were framed by the UAW as relatable to the problems of all workers. For instance, the UAW equated attacks on the basic wage to the refusal to grant equal pay and pointed to government policy and employer greed as the enemy of both male and female workers.[83] When the UAW cited amongst its goals for 1958, 'greater status for women in industry', it is likely that the organisation referred to all facets of industry, including trade union organisations.[84] Despite the UAW's ostensible silence regarding the 'boys club' mentality prevalent within the trade union movement, its advocacy of women unionists suggests the UAW was aware of the issue. In 1954 the UAW declared: 'it is only when womens' [*sic*] voices are raised in the Trade Unions that their real needs will be catered for'.[85]

Indeed, the UAW perceived a special need to support women workers. Amongst the Resolutions adopted by the NSW UAW in 1952, the organisation pledged to support and assist women workers in resisting discriminatory attacks and unemployment.[86] The UAW aided women from various industries in honouring this resolution:

> The UAW had assisted hundreds of women in the railways fighting against dismissals. When the UAW went to these women they said: "We have heard of the UAW and did not know how to get in touch with you". The UAW got out a leaflet on their behalf and they distributed it….The UAW had also assisted girls at Richard Hughes when they were out on strike. In the Postal Workers we assisted girls to set up a committee in defence of their rights and wages and these girls sent delegates to Canberra to see the Federal Government.[87]

The idea that women workers were aware of the UAW but unable to make contact, required the organisation to approach women directly.[88] The UAW urged its members to approach women factory

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[82] Minutes of UAW Executive Meeting (NSW), 2 December 1953, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[83] See for example: 'An explanation to women wage and salary earners', 30 October 1962, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[84] UAW Annual Report (NSW), 1957-1958, p. 1, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[85] Report on World Congress of Women, 1953, presented to Annual Meeting, 1954, p. 2, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC.
[86] Resolutions of the UAW Annual Conference (NSW), November 1952, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[87] Report of the Second Annual Conference of the UAW (NSW), 13-16 November 1952, p. 1, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[88] Report on World Congress of Women 1953, presented to Annual Meeting, 1954, p. 3, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC.

workers to discuss industrial issues. These calls were heeded by local groups and individual members of the UAW. In December 1953, the Ashfield and Liverpool Groups took a novel approach to connecting with female workers, 'adopting' factories with female employees and engaging in activities around their specific needs. The UAW urged the 'development of this work' to other branches, but the evolution of this particular strategy is undocumented.[89] Nevertheless, the UAW offered direct, practical assistance to women workers, supplementing the broader lack of trade union attention to women's industrial issues. Despite increasing support for equal pay by the trade union movement, trade union leaders simply did not prioritise gender-specific industrial issues, a position the UAW hoped to change through organisational cooperation, targeted propaganda and direct contact through working UAW members.

Organisational cooperation between the UAW and the trade union movement

Without a large contingent of trade unionist members, the UAW attempted to forge closer organisational ties to the trade union movement. In addition to those connections nurtured through the trade union women's organisations, the UAW also routinely courted direct contact with individual trade unions. These overtures sometimes produced encouraging results. In November 1953 the UAW accepted an invitation to attend the Teachers Federation Conference and a protest meeting of the Nurses Association – both unions with a large representation of female employees. [90] The NSW Executive subsequently sent a delegate to protest a new Award for the nurses, which saw their room and board rates raised significantly. The UAW further aided the Association, widely distributing a letter detailing the nurses' case to the public, the NSW Premier and other trade unions. By the end of the following year, the UAW reported that some hospitals had reconsidered the room and board rates within the Award following the campaign.[91] The UAW's reputation as effective advocates for women workers within the trade union movement encouraged some unions to seek help and advice from the organisation, concerning issues affecting female members.[92]

UAW overtures towards trade unions were not limited to industrial issues. In 1950 and again in 1964 the UAW suggested its members might approach union branches to support a campaign on prices, which would additionally address low wages and inflation. Members were encouraged to attend local factories and write to shop committees to arrange speakers in workplaces.[93] Following the latter campaign, the UAW claimed that relations with trade unions had been strengthened through mutually

[89] Minutes of Management Committee Meeting (NSW), 9 December 1953, p. 2, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[90] Minutes of Executive Meeting (NSW), 26 November 1953, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[91] Annual Report of the UAW (NSW), 1954, p. 6, z236, box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[92] Correspondence from the Federated Fodder and Fuel Trades Industrial Union of Australia to the UAW, 1 September 1967, 5.11 (ii) Equal Pay, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[93] UAW Newssheet (NSW), July 1964, p. 19, z236, Box 1, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU; Correspondence from Gwen George to 'Trade Unions, Trade Union Branches', 19 September 1950, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.

run campaigns and collaborations, notably campaigns around cost of living and social services. Also cited was UAW support for the 'girls' at the Yakka factory during a strike and the sharing of political literature between the UAW and trade unions.[94] Statements declaring the strengthening of ties between the UAW and the trade union movement were frequent between 1950 and 1970. In 1966 the UAW celebrated 'trade union cooperation': 'UAW activities in support of Trade Unions has led to increasing recognition by them of the value of our work and to a substantial increase in orders of Our Women.'[95]

By the early 1970s, however, the UAW lamented the lack of cooperation between the UAW and the trade unions in recruiting women to the labour movement:

> A continuing dilemma has been to assist women in industry to take action around their own demands. As UAW members they could explain their needs and show us how to assist them. The organisation would benefit from such a practice, but trade unions exist to solve these problems and so obviously we should direct these potentially active unionists into their own organisation. Time generally prevents more than one activity, and the unions themselves have little time to seek our co-operation…on the whole our contact is slight, when we believe it should be a field for concerted action.[96]

This analysis of UAW relations with individual trade unions, circa 1970, suggests that the organisation came to view its efforts to infiltrate the trade union movement as unsuccessful during the preceding period. Prior to this in-house history, the UAW presented its connections with the trade unions as mutually desired and continually expanding.[97] By the time this history was penned, however, the UAW was revaluating its relationship to the CPA and its focus on recruiting women in industry, which some members believed negatively impacted on the majority membership of housewives.[98] This gradual change in direction during the post-Menzies era will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five. Despite the implication that UAW and trade union efforts towards women's inclusivity were one sided, the UAW strove to fulfil its goal of politicisation of women workers throughout the 1950s and 1960s, adjusting its strategies and expectations accordingly, if not publicly.

The above quote from 1970 suggests a tension evident between the motivation to encourage women to join their unions and to gain working members in the UAW. This is consistent with the UAW's

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[94] UAW Newsletter (Vic), November 1964, p. 6, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[95] UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1966, Annual Report, p. 12, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[96] *Victorian Section. Union of Australian Women 1950-1970,* c. 1970, p. 2, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[97] See for example: 'Work with other Organisations', *Every Woman,* Special Issue, Annual Report 1956, p. 10, z236, Box 125, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU; UAW Newsletter (Vic), November 1964, 6; Annual Report, UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1966, p. 12, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[98] Milner, *Swimming against the tide,* 138-143; Curthoys and McDonald, *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade,* 102.

efforts to include non-members in political activity through community engagement, described earlier. The perception that working women did not have time to participate in two activities outside of work and home stimulated the UAW to focus on encouraging working women to join their unions in lieu of UAW membership. This was a way that the UAW could honour its agenda despite the perceived lack of trade union interest in its work. The optimism shown in 1951, when the UAW believed that advancing the interests of working women would increase its numbers, was replaced with a more pragmatic view as time proved otherwise.[99] The UAW's willingness to prioritise women's involvement in the trade union movement at the expense of expanding its own ranks and status, demonstrates commitment to winning women for the labour movement, in whichever way was expedient. The UAW never quite lost the motivation to interest women workers in the UAW, but circumstances required the organisation to alter its methods within industry. The UAW's primary strategy of filling its ranks with workers was not realised within the period, yet this did not stop the UAW from engaging in a method of influence, tried and tested by the CPA.

Working women's groups: the UAW embraces fractions[100]

Although the UAW's attempts to embrace working women produced often underwhelming results, evening meetings and targeted recruitment did yield some progress.[101] These efforts were rewarded with the formation of 'working women's groups', which became the focus of UAW efforts to draw women from industry into trade union activism. Through these working members the UAW could gain direct contact with women in industry, without the difficulty of attempted recruitment. Additionally, working women's groups served to reiterate the importance of industrial activism to members. As a 1961 article in *Our Women* stated, 'Out of it all comes a deepening interest in equal pay, job conditions, unionism and a feminine mateship which lends fresh strength to our united organisations'.[102]

Working women's groups, like the local branches, were formed on a suburban basis when numbers allowed, or otherwise populated by working members from the wider area in which they operated.[103] An early example of the conception of working women's groups comes from the NSW Annual Report of 1954. It was suggested that areas like Glebe, with large numbers of working members, form groups based around the problems of working women to foster understanding of these problems, and how the

[99] Build the Union of Australian Women, c. 1951, p. 3, 1.8 Reports/papers, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[100] The term 'fraction' refers to a group of communist workers within a trade union, whose goal is to promote communist talking points and to influence fellow unionists to support communist policies within the union. Here, I have used the term to refer to UAW members recreating this strategy within workplaces, not trade unions specifically.
[101] Annual Report of the UAW (NSW), 1957-1958, p. 8, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[102] 'Talking "Shop"', *Our Women,* October-December 1961, p. 2, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[103] 'Talking "Shop" with our working women', *Our Women,* Anniversary Issue 1963, p. 35, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

UAW could best address them.[104] UAW literature reported discussions within working women's groups and implored these members to act as representatives of the UAW within their places of work. Engaging with these sub-groups within the UAW afforded its members some status.

Working members held representative positions on the Management Committee in New South Wales.[105] Within the UAW newsletters, working women's groups were given their own section, variously titled 'Working Women' and 'Our Girls at Work', in which members reported on efforts to educate their non-UAW co-workers.[106] Frequent reporting on these activities served the further purpose of emphasising the importance of trade unionism to domestically engaged UAW members – members who might one day seek employment or court influence over friends and family members earning a wage. Another function of UAW working women's groups was to represent the organisation within the broader women's advocacy community. During the Annual Conference of the Australian Women's Charter in 1958, the Sydney Working Women's Group of the UAW managed the session on 'women in industry', presenting a working-class perspective to the array of women's organisations gathered.[107]

The core message of working women's groups was invariably 'unionise'. In May 1965 'Our Girls at Work' opened with the UAW's strong recommendation for women to join their unions and 'know their rights'. This was supported by an anecdote describing the experiences of UAW members on staff at the Lady Herring Spastic Centre in Victoria. UAW members employed as nurses' aides schooled their co-workers on industrial rights when uniform laundering services were revoked, successfully organising to obtain their demands. Nurses' aides in sections of the centre without UAW members on staff did not receive the reinstated entitlements.[108]

This indicates that the UAW mimicked the CPA's use of fractions in making working women more militant, potentially creating a carry-on effect for those women in future employment situations. Additionally, news of more favourable conditions won by those workers who spoke up at the Lady Herring Spastic Centre likely spread to other sections, potentially broadening the scope of UAW influence. This and similar stories that emerged from the 'working women's' sections of UAW newsletters also highlight the UAW's approach to enculturating women workers into industrial activism. By demonstrating to their co-workers the benefits of organising on a small, informal scale, UAW members made a strong case for future union membership.

[104] Annual Report of the UAW (NSW), 1954, p. 6, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[105] Annual Report of the UAW (NSW), 1957-1958, p. 7, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[106] See for example: UAW Newsletter (Vic), May 1965, p. 2; UAW Newsletter (Vic), November 1964, p. 6, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[107] Annual Report of the UAW (NSW), 1957-1958, p. 7, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[108] UAW Newsletter (Vic), May 1965, p. 2, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

The UAW capitalised on its functions for working women's groups, further emphasising the importance of union membership by stimulating discussion around topics that were of most relevance to women at work. In turn, members of working women's groups were encouraged to further these discussions in the workplace. The contents of these meetings were reported in the newsletter and included issues like childcare and compensation.[109] Working members were instructed to take UAW petitions into work with them and discuss the issues therein with their co-workers.[110] This targeted networking within factories, hospitals and offices was characteristic of communist strategy, requiring interpersonal campaigning from its members. Exemplary activists for the CPA and UAW, like trade unionists Gwen George and Stella Nord, worked tirelessly to increase their co-workers' knowledge of their rights at work. However, active UAW members in the workforce who never rose to such prominence within the trade union movement also exerted what influence they could with their workmates, fostering solidarity with women workers who were their peers.[111] It was participation in UAW working women's groups which encouraged this camaraderie, promoting common purpose and mutual support. A 1963 issue of *Our Women* exemplified this*:*

> The most popular working women's nights are Industry Nights, when a number of us from a particular industry really turn it on, telling all about what we make or do, what dough we earn, what funny things happen, what grouches and grumbles we've got and what we intend to do about it![112]

Industries represented within working women's groups were identified as 'the metal trades, railways, tobacco, meat, liquor trades, electrical trades and clothing trades'. While these groups were active in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Townsville, the organisation also claimed various 'local groups' in unidentified locations.[113] The concentration of working women in these specialised groups was designed to increase UAW influence in the workplace, but individual working members not directly linked to working women's groups were also expected to promote the UAW's agenda during work hours.[114] Whilst the UAW might not have attracted a large working membership directly, its influence on women workers almost certainly spread beyond its own membership, through the UAW's loose, informal network of fractions.

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[109] UAW Newsletter (Vic), November 1964, p. 6, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[110] UAW Newssheet (NSW), July 1964, p. 19, z236, Box 1, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[111] For example, the Bankstown UAW Working Women's Group reported on a celebratory luncheon held for female workers at the Casben Permanent Press Factory in 1958: Annual Report of the UAW (NSW), 1957-1958, p. 7, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[112] 'Talking "Shop" with our working women', *Our Women,* Anniversary Issue 1963, p. 35, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Report of National Secretary, 17 February 1961, p. 4, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

Propaganda and educational literature

Working women's groups and collaborative campaigns were not the only means of the UAW making inroads into trade unions. UAW press releases were sent to the 'trade union press', as well as communist publications.[115] By making women's rights in the workplace a routine and familiar feature of publications with a wide trade union readership, the UAW aimed to garner support and embed the idea of women's inclusion in trade unions. *Our Women* was disseminated to unions with large numbers of female employees. A 1964 newsletter reported that the Clothing Trades Union made an order for 100 copies of the magazine.[116] In 1966 the UAW reported to its members that an address to the Liquor Trades Union General Meeting by Eileen Cappochi resulted in the Union ordering 'five dozen' copies of *Our Women*.[117] Clearly, UAW members were proactive in pursuing these connections. In the same year, the UAW declared: 'More unions are in touch with us and take *Our Women*', with the Victorian section reporting that nine trade unions regularly ordered the magazine.[118] UAW efforts to interest unions in *Our Women* were designed to foster organisational ties, but also to interest women workers in the UAW and its work towards politicising women:

> By selling our journals at the factories when the women finish work, we can become friendly and interest them in the U.A.W. This was done very successfully with one issue of the journal where over one hundred copies were sold in one area alone.[119]

In 1961 *Our Women* reported on conditions in the clothing trades industry, dubbed 'the calico jungle'. The article claimed that 95% of clothing trade workers in NSW were women, with the majority of this figure comprising married housewives unable to support a family on the male basic wage alone.[120] In fact, women comprised just shy of 82% of wage or salary earners in the clothing trades industry in New South Wales according to the 1961 Census, which did not include marital status by industry.[121] Some hyperbole notwithstanding, the UAW's point was valid. Exploitation within industries heavily reliant on women's labour was inevitable prior to the legislation of equal employment rights for men and women, including equal pay and equal opportunity. Another *Our Women* article celebrated a new Award handed down to 'tea ladies' – a job title exclusively pertaining to women – in early 1963, featuring UAW member and 'tea lady' Helen Brown. Brown was described as a proud new member

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[115] Minutes of UAW Executive Meeting (NSW), 29 January 1958, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[116] UAW Newsletter (Vic), April 1964, p. 3, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[117] UAW Newsletter (Vic), March 1966, p. 4, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[118] Annual Report, UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1966, p. 3; p. 13, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[119] Annual Report of the UAW (NSW), 1954, p. 6, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[120] 'Calico Jungle', *Our Women,* March-May 1961, p. 7, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[121] Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics 1961, 'Males and Females in the Workforce Classified According to Industry in Conjunction with Occupational Status, 30th June 1961', <http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf >.

of the Miscellaneous Workers' Union, which had won the Award for the tea ladies.[122] Connections of this kind were celebrated within the UAW as progress for the organisation and for women workers generally.

The UAW produced pamphlets to educate and advise women – and men – of their industrial rights. One such pamphlet explained in detail the process of claiming unemployment benefits and registering to find a job. It repeatedly informed the reader that receiving government benefits is not charity but was a right earned through paying tax and provides a step by step guide to the claiming process, including variations considering the differing circumstances of claimants.[123] In 1962, the UAW National Committee circulated a three page document explaining the campaign for higher wages by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), the Australian Council of Salaried and Professional Associations and the High Council of Commonwealth Public Service Organisations, and why the UAW supported the campaign on behalf of 'women wage and salary earners'.[124] The document targeted both the Commonwealth Arbitration Court and the Menzies government as anti-worker and anti-working class. Lost purchasing power, wage freezes and deteriorating conditions were cited as the direct result of this anti-working-class attitude pervading the political structures in deference to the profits of 'big business.' The alternate economic viewpoint outlined in this document is, of course, consistent with that proffered by left-wing unions and the CPA. Nonetheless the UAW tailored the details of the document to women by arguing the relevance of industrial policy to female workers.

With the need to supplement the influence of its small band of active working members, the UAW attempted to stimulate women workers by appealing to their self-interest and giving them the tools and the vocabulary to campaign for themselves. Following a UAW member's report on her experience with a workplace compensation claim in 1964, the UAW directed efforts towards educating working women on the 'golden rules of compensation' through a series of articles in *Our Women.*[125] The UAW stressed the importance to working women of knowing their correct rate of pay, particularly when in part-time and casual employment. Despite its efforts to educate and assist working women through both interpersonal and published communication, the UAW continued to stress that real equality would be achieved through the infiltration of the trade unions by women workers. In a 1961 article for *Every Woman* the UAW celebrated International Women's Day with a reminder that, whilst enshrined in law, women's rights were dependent on attitudes and actions within the wider community. The article urged women workers to ensure their rights through action and for

[122] '"Union" Brand Tea is Best', *Our Women,* June-August 1963, p. 23, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[123] Pamphlet, 'Know Your Rights', issued by E. Hampson, Union of Australian Women, [N.D.], z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[124] 'An explanation to women wage and salary earners', 30 October 1962, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[125] 'Golden Rules on Compo', *Our Women,* March-May 1962, p. 21; 'Golden Rules on Compo', *Our Women,* June-August 1963, p. 23, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

their male comrades to fight alongside them. 'The measure of success of women will be decided by the trade union struggle and the question of women joining their trade unions.'[126] In 1962 *Our Women* similarly declared, 'The UAW is the friend of working women, aims to help and encourage women to play a part in unions. We believe that together men and women, can end discrimination and improve wages and conditions.'[127]

The large-scale inclusion of women workers within trade unions was a lofty aspiration for the UAW and one that was certainly not achieved between 1950 and 1970. However, the UAW relentlessly promoted the benefits of unionism to women through its literature and at various public forums. The UAW's influence through individual members in the workplace was exploited in the same way that the CPA used fractions to court influence within the unions and organisations like the UAW. Despite many challenges preventing the UAW from mobilising a large contingent of working women into its own ranks and subsequently into the trade union movement, it is feasible that the UAW contributed to the precipitation of a cultural change within working class communities, easing women's later entry into union activity.[128] Although there is no precise way to measure the UAW's contribution to the rise in women's union participation in the subsequent decades, most likely the UAW played a role in the embryonic stages of the shift, as with other issues like childcare – generally attributed to the WLM.[129] The UAW contributed to multiple campaigns tied to the importance of trade union participation, inextricably linked to its politicisation of working class women. These included the rights of married women in employment, the lifting of stigma attached to working mothers, unemployment and equal opportunity for women. The issue which embodied women workers' disenfranchisement prior to 1972, however, was wage injustice between the sexes. The final section of this chapter will examine the UAW's contribution to the equal pay campaign and issues affecting women in the workplace between 1950 and 1970.

The UAW and equal pay: conflicting attitudes and changing motivations

The issue on which the UAW and CPA based their hopes for women workers to embrace unionism was equal pay. The UAW allied with the trade union movement in its campaign, working with the ACTU and promoting and contributing to the work of various committees, such as the Victorian Trades Hall Equal Pay Committee.[130] In the mid-1970s, the UAW would question its decision to

[126] 'Summary of Discussion on Women and their Work, International Women's Day 1961', *Every Woman,* April-May-June 1961, p. 10, z236, Box 125, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[127] 'Two New Working Women's Groups', *Our Women,* September-December 1962, p. 16, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[128] Donaldson establishes that '72% of growth in the union movement' was due to women's participation between 1974 and 1984. Mike Donaldson, 'Women in the Union Movement: Organisation, Representation and Segmentation', *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, 28, (1991), 131-147 at 131.
[129] Kevin O'Toole, 'The Union of Australian Women: The Childcare Issue', *Labour History*, 75 (1998), 144-154.
[130] Annual Report of the UAW (NSW), 1957-1958, p. 7, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU; UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1966, p. 2, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

follow the lead of the trade union movement in its pursuit of equal pay during the 1950s and early 1960s.[131] This was a hindsight analysis based upon the success of the UAW's independent submissions to the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, in a series of hearings granting equal pay from 1969-1972. Although the trade union movement was an integral part of this collaborative effort towards achieving wage justice, success would have been harder won still, if not for the groundswell of support for gender equality in the late 1960s, precipitated by the burgeoning WLM and buttressed by established women's groups, including the UAW. Despite the UAW's later criticism, its deference to trade union strategy in pursuit of equal pay during the earlier period served its working-class base and ideological inclination. Further, the UAW's interest in the equal pay campaign at this time was firmly tied to its attempts to infiltrate the trade union movement with women workers. Like gender inclusion within trade unions, women's enthusiasm for achieving wage equality was not assured, despite the seemingly obvious motivator of self-interest. The socio-cultural climate of the Menzies era complicated women's perception of the issue, within the UAW and without.

In the extant records of the UAW, equal pay is placed at the forefront of the organisation's mission. For example, a 1951 resolution calls on 'the Australian Government's Arbitration Courts' and the ACTU to ratify the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention guaranteeing equal pay for men and women, pledging unwavering assistance to achieve equal pay.[132] In 1963 the UAW declared that it had supported equal pay 'in any way possible' and likened the struggle to that of the Suffragettes' campaign to win women the vote – only extended and as yet unattained.[133] Despite these strong declarations of organisational commitment to wage justice, the rank and file membership of the UAW lacked passion for the campaign outside of 'in-principle' support. Victorian Secretary until 1963, Hilda Smith, speculated that while many members strongly supported equal pay, it was not their 'burning question', because they did not earn a wage.[134] This non-committal support for equal pay among housewives was juxtaposed with the widespread ambivalence of women workers towards industrial agitation, described above. In 1953, the UAW lamented that many working women were unaware of their correct rate of pay, let alone their ILO endorsed right to equal pay.[135] An article from 1961 described women workers who were afraid of asserting their industrial rights due to potential dismissal, or else indifferent because they viewed their employment as temporary in a culture which

[131] *Work by Women for Women, 1950-1975 Souvenir History*, c. 1975, p. 3, 6.2.2 Victorian Section: Union of Australian Women: 1950-1975, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[132] Resolution on ILO Convention on Equal Pay, 1951, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[133] 'Pathway to Equality', *Our Women,* Anniversary Issue 1963, p. 39, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[134] Hilda Smith interview with Jodi Ellis, 14 August 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette Recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[135] Report on World Congress of Women, 1953, presented to Annual Meeting, 1954, p. 2, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.

promoted domesticity for women after marriage.[136] Even working women who were active in pursuing their rights did not necessarily prioritise equal pay, with lack of childcare a more immediate problem for many women.[137] Equal pay was simply not the 'burning question' of women in the Menzies era.

Despite the erosion of women's wages and opportunities for more varied employment after the war, adherence to the family wage system muted enthusiasm for wage equality.[138] During the mid-1950s, the Prime Minister's Department sought to capitalise on the conflicting motivations of Australian women in its bid to avoid granting equal pay: "Further, one might ask what would be the reaction of women who were performing the function of housewives if their out-of-work husbands were being kept out of jobs by other women without dependants?"[139] This line of reasoning seems to have resonated with many women according to a 1956 *Woman's Day* poll, although the UAW could have rebutted this argument by pointing out the Menzies government's culpability for high unemployment rates.[140]

Like the CPA, the UAW dismissed the idea that men 'deserved' jobs over women, arguing that women with and without dependents worked for a number of legitimate reasons. Both organisations further contended that women should have the right to work for personal fulfillment and deserved to be paid equitably for the job they undertook, regardless of their reasons for taking it.[141] This was a progressive stance in the Menzies era, as was the UAW's insistence that quality childcare programs would do more to stem 'child delinquency' than mothers staying home and out of the workforce. The UAW's commitment to wage justice and related issues remained steadfast throughout the 1950s and 1960s, with the organisation incorporating equal pay into its overall efforts towards the political education of working-class women.

Wage justice from a socialist perspective

Although the equal pay campaign was not a top priority for many women within the UAW, a number of leading members, influenced by their Party affiliation, viewed wage justice as central to UAW aims. In 1951 the UAW and CPA protested against women's payrate decreasing to 75% (from the

[136] Bollins, 'Working Women and Trade Unions', *Our Women,* p. 28, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[137] Newsletter (Vic), November 1964, p. 6, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[138] Sheridan and Stretton, 'Pragmatic Procrastination', 136-137.
[139] NAA: A462, 374/7, 'Equal Pay for Men and Women – General Reps on Government Policy' 1949-1956, Prime Minister's Department Report on Equal Pay for the Sexes, c. 1955.
[140] Sheridan and Stretton, 'Pragmatic Procrastination', 137; See for example: Union of Australian Women Press Statement, 1 November 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas and Minutes 1957-1979, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[141] Report of National Secretary, 17 February 1961, p. 3, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections; Communist Party Policy for Women, p. 2, Item 11/4 1976:0028, Box 3, CPA Victoria State Committee, UMA.

wartime 90%) of men's wages.[142] This campaign foreshadowed the UAW's entrance into the equal pay campaign, on the terms first laid out by the CPA during its 14th Congress of 1945 and re-enforced during fraction meetings with UAW cadres and in the CPA's later 'Policy for Women'.[143] Through its promotion of equal pay, the CPA aimed to 'win women for the progressive movement', with the UAW at the forefront of these efforts from its conception.[144] Whilst the UAW campaigned on the issue of equal pay in the pursuit of social justice, it did so with deference to this broader political mission. Though in later years the UAW would 'work effectively in collaboration with feminist organisations', during the 1950s there was a clear divide between mainstream feminist organisations and the UAW due to the ideological binary informing the politics of the period.[145] Of course, tried and tested methods, such as letter writing campaigns and petitions were employed by the UAW to advance wage justice. However, the UAW politicised equal pay in ways other women's organisations did not, connecting the issue unfavourably to the Menzies government's economic policies and to the injustice of the capitalist system itself.

The UAW argued that allowing employers to pay women less than their male counterparts would encourage the exploitation of workers in general.[146] The idea advanced by the UAW that employers would hire women over men to reduce costs had little to do with fostering solidarity but was nevertheless sound logic presented by the UAW from a typically socialist perspective. The CPA declared that 'when women are denied equal pay, they can be used by employers as cheap labour'.[147] Of course neither the UAW nor the CPA exclusively tailored its arguments around equal pay for a blue collar, male audience. It was important to gain the support of men and their trade unions, but equally as important to rally women workers with no experience of militancy. In its 'Policy for Women', the CPA presented the absence of equal pay as indicative of the dominance of the 'employer class', and its propensity for exploitation.[148] *Our Women* routinely ran articles describing the injustice of women's pay rates from the perspective of exploited women workers. One article described the outrageous practice of justifying women's suitability for menial, repetitive work by praising their acumen for it, while still paying 75% of the male rate: 'Experts claim women are more

[142] 'We Unite for Peace…for Life', *Our Women*, Anniversary Issue, 1963, p. 18, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections; 'War Drive Attack on Women's Wages', *Guardian,* 15 February 1951, 6.
[143] *Jobs, Freedom, Progress* (Draft Resolution), 31 May 1945, Item 2/1, Box 1, CPA Victoria State Committee, UMA; NAA: A6122/16, 1174, report, C. P. of A. Women's Cadres' Meeting', p. 2; Communist Party Policy for Women, pp. 1-18, Item 11/4 1976:0028, Box 3, CPA Victoria State Committee, UMA.
[144] *Jobs, Freedom, Progress* (Draft Resolution), 31 May 1945, CPA, UMA.
[145] Marian Sawyer, 'Reclaiming Social Liberalism: Women and the State', in *Women and the State,* ed. Renate Howe (Melbourne: La Trobe University Press, 1993): 1-21 at 5.
[146] UAW Newsletter (Vic), June 1965, p. 5, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[147] 'Communist Party Policy for Women', p. 17, Item 11/4 1976:0028, Box 3, CPA Victoria State Committee, UMA.
[148] Ibid, 3.

temperamentally suited to repetitive process work and that we are more dextrous in handling small parts than men. But they don't pay us more for these qualities'.[149]

In 1951, the NSW Secretary of the UAW, Gwen George, circulated a letter to members which linked the issue of women's wages to the 1951 Referendum on communism. She questioned whether affirmation of the proposed ban on communism would be succeeded by a slew of autocratic decisions to reduce women's wages and employment rights, made possible by the broad powers sought under the proposed referendum, which was eventually defeated.[150] In 1956, Kath Williams wrote about her experience representing the UAW at the World Conference of Women Workers in Budapest, with equal pay for women as the central focus. Williams was the UAW's leading advocate for equal pay and a prominent figure in the Liquor Trades Union.[151] If the CPA encouraged the UAW to prioritise the equal pay campaign, D'Aprano contends that it was Kath Williams – UAW and CPA member – who easily convinced the CPA and its trade unionist cadres to reinvigorate the fight for women's wage justice within the unions.[152]

In reporting to the 1956 Women's Congress, Williams argued, on behalf of the UAW, that funding for equal pay must come at the expense of monopoly profits and a reduction in war expenditure.[153] This familiar rejoinder to government and industry reluctance to fund equal pay exemplifies the hard-line approach taken by the UAW in the effort to extend a competitive alternative to the anti-communist propaganda espoused by the Menzies government. The consistently employed strategy of linking campaign subjects to socialist talking points like war, living standards and industrial relations served to convey this alternate political viewpoint to women. The repetition of communist political points would only have an impact, however, if enough women became invested through specifically targeted action which would appeal to women.

Among the people: Esther Taylor, Gwen George and Stella Nord

The UAW took a localised, even personal approach to promoting women's equality in the workplace. Prior to the World Conference of Working Women in 1956, UAW members visited a container factory to convey the details of the conference to the women workers and receive their input on issues affecting them.[154] UAW member and clothing trades worker Esther Taylor, who attended the

[149] 'Speed-up and lay-offs – workers' share', *Our Women,* September-December 1962, p. 9, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[150] Correspondence from Gwen George to UAW members, 31 July 1951, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[151] *Equality Will be Won,* 1956, p. 2, 5.11 (ii) Equal Pay, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[152] Zelda D'Aprano, *Kath Williams. The Unions and the Fight for Equal Pay* (North Melbourne: Spinifex, 2001), 58-59.
[153] *Equality Will be Won,* 9.
[154] 'What Women Factory Workers Think', *Every Woman,* June 1956, p. 7, z236, Box 125, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.

conference with Kath Williams, spoke at several factories, raising funds for the trip and generating interest in the subject of equal pay. Taylor's factory tour resulted in the formation of an equal pay committee, populated by some of the women workers she had spoken with, in addition to UAW members and representatives of the Newcastle Trades and Labour Council.[155] Reports of such factory visits and personal exchanges appeared frequently in UAW publications.

During 'Pay Week' in 1962, Gwen George fielded questions from women workers on equal pay, as reported in *Our Women*.[156] George reassured women that attaining equal pay would not result in job losses or the introduction of heavier duties. She further stressed the importance of women receiving the same 'margins' for skill as men in the demand for equal pay. Perhaps the most substantial contribution of the UAW in maintaining the relevance of the equal pay campaign during the Menzies era was through frequent and well-presented propaganda. Although its readership could not compare to mainstream women's magazines like *Women's Day*, *Our Women* was a tool by which the organisation could disseminate progressive views on equal pay, and it did so regularly. Articles in UAW publications *Our Women* and *Every Woman* were often written from a subjective perspective, allowing the reader to relate to the women behind the words.

Stella Nord was a Queensland UAW member, trade unionist and communist. Her contributions to *Our Women* on the subject of equal pay provide an insight into women's activism on the 'shop floor' during the 1950s and 1960s. O'Lincoln referred to Nord's success in organising her female co-workers in the meat-packing industry to militant action for equal pay.[157] In a 1963 issue of *Our Women* Nord detailed her efforts to convince her male co-workers to join the struggle for wage equality.[158] According to Nord's account, she passionately addressed the reluctant men's arguments against equal pay in the dining room during lunch. These included questions as to the weight women could lift compared to men and simply adherence to the status quo. Nord pointed out that men engaged in work that did not involve heavy lifting were still paid more than women doing the same job. She articulated the injustice inherent in these circumstances and appealed to the men's sense of solidarity. The article ends with Nord conceding that she was unable to change every mind that day in 1956 but had since changed many more. The UAW was consistent and persuasive in its many efforts to promote equal pay, suggesting to readers following one such article: "You might even start to make a few enquiries yourself".[159] The UAW linked the issue to the broader struggle for a more equitable

[155] 'Industrial and Professional Women', *Every Woman Special Issue,* Annual Report 1956, p. 7, z236, Box 125, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[156] 'The Rate for the Job', *Our Women,* June-August 1962, p. 12, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[157] O'Lincoln, 'Against the stream', 95.
[158] Stella Nord, 'You'll all get the Sack', *Our Women,* October-December 1961, p. 12, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[159] 'We Call it Justice', *Every Woman,* June 1954, p. 8, z236, Box 125, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.

society, declaring in the same 1954 article from *Every Woman*: "Some call it "Equal Pay", some call it "The Rate for the Job", others call it "Equality for the Sexes", but we call it Common Justice."[160]

Equal opportunity, the marriage bar and unemployment

The UAW rarely isolated the topic of equal pay when appealing to women workers. Although often the central feature of the UAW's talking points on sex discrimination in the workplace, the organisation drew correlations to issues like the rights of married women workers, equal opportunity and unemployment. The UAW asserted that while there were few remaining legal obstacles preventing women from the same educational, employment and advancement opportunities as men, societal attitudes were an equally formidable barrier to gender equality.[161] Much of the UAW's contribution to promoting equal opportunity for women lay in challenging the deeply ingrained beliefs about women's role in public life, which prevented women from entering many industries and receiving promotions. In 1958 it was reported that the Newcastle Branch of the UAW sent a speaker to meetings of the Miscellaneous Workers' Union in various towns around the area to speak on equal pay and the right of married women to work.[162] The UAW equated wage justice and the employment rights of married women because these issues highlighted the overall discrimination of women workers.

During the 1950s and 1960s, newly married women were either dismissed from their positions, or otherwise lost 'seniority' and security of employment in most industries. This was common practice in Australia and in other developed nations. The UAW argued that as signatories of the United Nations Charter, the Australian Government had a responsibility to uphold the right to work for all citizens, irrespective of sex.[163] The UAW believed that the spirit of this statute was flouted by the 'marriage bar' for women in public service. It followed that the example set by the Federal Government would directly correlate to employer attitudes regarding married women workers. The organisation pointed out that a 1958 report on public service recruitment recommended that the marriage bar should be repealed, and married women offered permanent positions. [164] However, no action was taken by the Federal Government until 1966, when Australia finally joined the majority of democratic countries which had already lifted the marriage bar.[165] The UAW urged women to write to the government and their Federal members in protest of discrimination against married workers,

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[160] Ibid.
[161] 'Women and their Work', *Every Woman*, April-May-June 1961, p. 9, z236, Box 125, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[162] Annual Report of the UAW (NSW), 1957-1958, p. 8, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[163] Pamphlet: 'A Woman is Sacked', c. 1960, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas and Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[164] The UAW cites the report of the inquiry into public service recruitment as being released in 1958, however the Australian Dictionary of Biography states the year as 1959: G. C. Bolton, 'Boyer, Sir Richard James Fildes (1891-1961), *Australian Dictionary of Biography,* 13, (1993).
[165] Kath Macdermott, 'Public Service/Policy', *The Encyclopedia of Women and Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia,* 2014, The Australian Women's Archive Project, www.womenaustralia.info/leaders/biogs.

calling the policy 'out of date'. The organisation further claimed that half of women teachers were married, pointing out dependence of the education system on the labour of married women.[166]

The inequitable treatment of married teachers was of particular concern to the UAW. The high number of women employed in education brought issues of sex discrimination to the fore. From 1955, the UAW assisted the Teachers' Federation on this issue, including handling a petition on wage equality for teachers.[167] Gendered pay discrepancies between teachers exemplified the injustice of unequal pay, given that male and female employees performed the same tasks. Further, because education played a key role in the development of children, advocacy for the effective implementation of equal pay was thought to be of special interest to women through their maternal role. The UAW claimed this niche, commenting in 1966 that many of its members, mothers to teenage children, had joined mothers' clubs and school committees in an effort to drive change. [168] The organisation argued that the removal of the marriage bar would aid in lowering class sizes and improve the education system in general.[169] The UAW also pointed out the waste of resources wrought by removing married teachers from their positions, citing Australian children as victims of the policy.[170] Victorian teachers and the women's organisations who rallied beside them were the last in Australia to achieve success, celebrating the removal of restrictions on married teachers in 1969.[171]

The 'marriage bar' was not the only industrial issue affecting women, linked by the UAW to the failing education system and lack of opportunity. In 1960 the UAW endorsed the Queensland Trade Union Congress' call to extend equal rights to girls in education, particularly vocational training.[172] In 1966 the UAW took a more direct approach to this issue, preparing a submission for the Apprenticeship Inquiry arguing the need to open apprenticeships across the trades for girls.[173] Rising youth unemployment was identified as a problem connected to the poor quality of education in Australia, with the UAW raising concerns about the ability of school leavers to obtain work.[174] *Our Women* featured a full page spread on youth unemployment in 1963, emphasising the plight of young women in the Newcastle region. UAW members surveyed these young women and found that over 50

[166] Pamphlet: 'A Woman is Sacked', c. 1960, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas and Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[167] Annual Report of the UAW (NSW), 1955, p. 9, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[168] Annual Report, UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1966, p. 8, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[169] Resolutions Adopted at Annual Meeting (Qld), 1-4 November 1961, p. 4, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas and Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[170] 'Pity you Married', *Our Women,* May-March 1961, p. 9, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[171] Newsletter (Vic), May 1969, p. 1, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[172] Annual Meeting of the UAW (Qld), October 26-29 1960, p. 4, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas and Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[173] 'Reporting from the Management Committee', UAW News Sheet (NSW), February 1966, p. 5, z236, Box 1, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[174] Report of National Secretary, 17 February 1961, p. 3, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

per cent had obtained their school leaving certificate but were still unable to find work. It was reported that at one site attended by the UAW, over 200 girls lined up for one advertised position.[175] However, the problem of unemployment was not limited to youth.

Unemployment was a central concern of the UAW throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In 1961 Pat Elphinston informed the UAW National Committee that hundreds of women laid off in the electrical trades would not be counted in official unemployment figures, because of their sex.[176] The year prior, the UAW had determined to pressure Federal and State Governments to grant married women workers the right to receive unemployment benefits.[177] The UAW linked high unemployment to its social services campaign and in 1962 produced a national petition, challenging politicians to address the issue through job creation.[178] The organisation was at pains to counter arguments made by employer groups and conservative branches of government, which asserted that equal pay would exacerbate the unemployment problem. The UAW alternately proffered that spending generated by higher wages for women would spur job creation, mitigating unemployment.[179]

Conclusion

Sheridan and Stretton have characterised the Menzies era as a time of defeat for Australian women.[180] Despite the rising number of women entering the workforce throughout the 1950s and 1960s, industry and government were slow to address the need for systemic change in step with the international standards set by the ILO and the almost imperceptible march of progress towards equal employment rights for all Australians. Conservative social values hindered women's progress towards equality by dictating that the role of mother was best undertaken in the home and this was reflected in the 'family wage' for men and the 'marriage bar' for women. The divisive class politics of the period further marginalised gender-specific industrial issues, with the male dominated trade union movement compelled to prioritise the defence of the basic wage and workers' entitlements within a hostile arbitration system. For their part, many Australian women lacked the resources or the motivation to drive change. Despite the apparent stagnation of women's industrial advancement since the gains made during World War II, the UAW and other women's groups patiently but relentlessly set the preconditions which ultimately led to cultural and systemic change in Australian society. The significant achievements of the Women's Liberation Movement in the early 1970s may not have been

[175] 'Higher Training! But Fewer Jobs', *Our Women,* June-August 1963, p. 13, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[176] Report of National Secretary, 17 February 1961, p. 1, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[177] Annual Meeting of the UAW (Qld), October 26-29 1960, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas and Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[178] Decisions of Meeting of the National Executive, 10-11 February 1962, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas and Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[179] 'The Right to a Job with Equal Pay!', *Our Women,* September-December 1963, p. 25, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[180] Sheridan and Stretton, 'Pragmatic Procrastination', 133.

possible without the painstaking efforts of organisations like the UAW exerting what influence they had over the communities in which they were active.

The UAW's effectiveness in promoting gender inclusion within industry and the labour movement cannot be definitively measured. Its voice was relatively small within the Australian political landscape and pervasive anti-communism discouraged the mainstream media from featuring its point of view with any frequency. However, the UAW's efforts towards women's integration in industry and the labour movement was one of the few campaigns targeting working class women. Its work with trade union women's organisations was a clever and effective way to interest housewives in industrial and economic issues, normalising their involvement in a traditionally masculine sphere. More ambitious still was the UAW's frustrated plans to infiltrate the trade unions with women workers. Despite the lacklustre response from both trade unions and women workers to the UAW's calls for women's activation within the trade union movement, the UAW was able to disseminate ideas through its members in industry and its literature.

The inevitable flow of educative information within working class communities contributed, however humbly, to the awareness and growing acceptance of women's changing role in society. The small victories celebrated by the working women of the UAW in aiding their co-workers is further evidence of the UAW's potential influence with women workers. Finally, the UAW contributed to the public political discourse which kept the issue of equal pay and women's rights in the workplace alive and in the public consciousness, culminating in its submission during the 1969 Equal Pay case which paved the way to wage justice. Exemplary individual activists like Kath Walker, Gwen George and Stella Nord represented the UAW with passion and determination at the forefront of the equal pay campaign within the trade unions, workplaces and on the international stage.

Chapter Four

The World Stage: Internationalism at Home and Abroad

'A woman's place is in the world.'[1]

Introduction

Internationalism, as a political perspective, was a relatively new concept to many Australians in the early 1950s – traditional ties to the British Empire notwithstanding. To ordinary Australians, the importation of non-British culture, political ideas and even people was perceived as a threat to the 'national character'.[2] However, the conclusion of World War II became the catalyst for a more connected world, heralding advancements in travel and communication in addition to the establishment of the United Nations Organisation (UN) in 1945. Australian feminist and socialist Jessie Street embodied a new class of international activist, capitalising on the opportunities for women's advancement presented by the burgeoning phenomenon of post-colonial globalisation.[3] Street's role in the creation of the Declaration of Human Rights and the Status of Women Commission, in her capacity as an Australian delegate to the UN, highlight the historical significance of women's contributions to reimagining the world in the post-war era.[4]

Paralleling the establishment of the UN, Street became a founding member of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF).[5] This conglomeration of women's organisations across the world promoted universal equality; however, the WIDF did so while denouncing imperialist practices and embracing member organisations from behind the 'iron curtain'. In the political climate of the Cold War, this quickly delegitimised the WIDF in the eyes of anti-communist governments. Still, with a diverse membership counted in the tens of millions by the 1950s and an array of influential and talented women at its helm, the WIDF flourished, working with the UN from 1947, and gaining official consultative status in 1968.[6] It was to the WIDF that the UAW would look for inspiration and leadership and through the WIDF that the UAW would project its voice on the world stage.

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[1] 'International News', *Every Woman,* December 1955, p. 10, z236, Box 125, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[2] John Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties,* 67.
[3] Robert J Holton, *Making Globalisation,* (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 41.
[4] Jessie Street, *Jessie Street. A Revised Autobiography,* Ed. Lenore Coltheart, (Sydney: The Federation Press, 2004), 217.
[5] Street, *Jessie Street,* 209.
[6] Booklet: *10th Anniversary of the Women's International Democratic Federation*, c. 1955, p. 3, z236, Box 6, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU; Milner, *Swimming Against the Tide,* 117.

Through a discussion of internationalism as a central driver of UAW activity, this chapter will develop the analysis of the UAW's politicisation of Australia's working-class women in this key area. Mid-century, left-wing internationalism prioritised transnational structures and global cooperation over national interests in the pursuit of peace and equality.[7] The Menzies government argued in favour of internationalism over isolationism; however, this preference favoured selective cooperation with 'culturally similar' nations and was framed as a more effective defence strategy against communist aggression.[8] First, this chapter will examine the marriage of philosophies central to the UAW's approach to both its domestic and international activism: socialism, internationalism and maternalism. Second, the chapter will discuss the UAW's ties to the WIDF; it will provide a broader understanding of the UAW's relationship to the international community of left-wing activists to which it belonged and illuminate the process by which the UAW inculcated working class Australian housewives into that community.

The UAW was actively engaged in the movement for peace and disarmament during the 1950s and 1960s. Through a discussion of the UAW's peace activism, the chapter will argue that the UAW wove the narrative of international cooperation through every aspect of its agenda and that it embraced the process of globalisation in its work to politicise Australian women. Third, the chapter will analyse the UAW's position on world politics, with particular attention to how its slanted rhetoric served to undermine its criticism of American military aggression. Fourth, the chapter will examine the UAW's contribution to the changing cultural dynamics of the 1950s and 1960s through a discussion of its challenge to American influence within children's entertainment. Finally, the chapter will highlight the UAW's domestic and international campaigns against systemic racism and colonialism, an integral component of its efforts to broaden the definition of Australian identity and encourage Australian housewives to think globally.

Maternalism and Internationalism

From its earliest beginnings, the UAW contributed to international discourse around the role of women in promoting peace and socialism, utilising the language of maternalism in accordance with the philosophy of the WIDF.[9] The UAW's drive to include its constituents in political discussion around international topics complemented this outward perspective. In encouraging working-class women to voice their opinions on Australian foreign policy and international affairs, the UAW once

[7] For a definition of political internationalism, see: [N.D.] Arora, *Political Science,* (New York: McGraw Hill Education, 2019), 2.
[8] E. M. Andrews, *A History of Australian Foreign Policy. From Dependence to Independence,* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1979), 167.
[9] See for example: Constitution of the Union of Australian Women, UAW (NSW), 1952, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU; Secretaries Report of First Annual Conference, 8 November 1951, p. 5, 1.8 Reports/papers, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

again declared that women's political agency had expanded beyond the home – albeit with 'motherhood' as the central justification for this agency.

The presentation of international politics through the lens of universal motherhood was part of the UAW's overall strategy to politicise and educate. Philosophically, to embrace maternalism women were not necessarily required to be mothers themselves, but rather to accept women's societal role as nurturer. Former UAW member Meg Arrowsmith has recalled this sentiment espoused during the World Congress of Mothers in 1956, with the term 'motherhood' used both literally and symbolically to describe the role of women in the care and protection of humanity by promoting peace.[10] The idea of the politically active woman motivated by maternal empathy can also be linked to communist doctrine. The CPA's *Policy for Women*, for example, suggests Australian women have a 'special responsibility' to assist Australia's Indigenous population, in part due to the exploitation of Indigenous youth and the state sanctioned removal of children from their families.[11] Simic has described the intersection of maternalism with the UAW's more radical political outlook: 'Motherhood was emphasised as a universal common language and set of beliefs and, in this way, socialist internationalism was accommodated'.[12]

The UAW publicly and proudly claimed connection to the WIDF, extolling the virtues of the international organisation within its various publications. UAW journals and newsletters routinely referred to UAW and WIDF policy synonymously.[13] In 1956 *Every Woman* declared:

> The formation of the Women's International Democratic Federation has helped as no other organisation could to bring women together to fight for peace and equality. The WIDF is not only a champion of women's rights but has always shown that people of the world have common problems, love life, home and children, and can live and work together in peace and prosperity.[14]

In highlighting these aspects of the WIDF, the UAW promoted the ideals of internationalism and maternalism through a socialist lens, as a salve to the chaos and destruction of insular nationalism and war. In 1956 the UAW reprinted an article from *Soviet Women,* declaring American author Vivian Hallinan as 'an inspiration to mothers everywhere.' The article explained the role of mothers in the

[10] Meg Arrowsmith interview with Jodi Ellis, 16 October 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette Recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[11] Communist Party Policy for Women, c. early 1960s, p. 5, Item 11/4 1976:0028, Box 3, CPA Victoria State Committee, UMA.
[12] Simic, 'Butter not Bombs', 07.5.
[13] Newsletter (Vic), April 1964, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[14] 'International Women's Day', *Every Woman,* February 1956, p. 3, z236, Box 125, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.

pursuit of international peace and cooperation: 'The march of our generation toward a bright and better future is irresistible. In this struggle the mothers of the world must be firm and brave.'[15]

The idea that women wanted peace in order to guarantee their children's future was a popular notion following the two world wars and the looming confrontation many predicted between East and West Germany or the USSR and the USA. Organisations such as Save Our Sons (SOS) and pacifist religious groups garnered support and sympathy for those women fearful of losing their male children to conscription during the world wars and subsequent conflicts. During the Korean War, the *Guardian* reported on an anti-conscription meeting with the headline: '"I won't Let my Sons be Conscripted" Says Mother'.[16] Though women were commonly thought to be unsuited to the rigours of politics in Australia and around the world in the first half of the twentieth century, their collective voice on matters of children and family were taken somewhat more seriously, because these issues were deemed relevant by society to wives and mothers.

Foundation members of the WIDF took the following oath: 'We take a solemn oath to fight without respite to assure the world a lasting peace, sole guarantee of happiness in our homes and of the development of our children.'[17] By the 1950s, women's organisations of diverse political orientations employed maternalist discourse to justify involvement in matters previously the domain of men. Among those leftist organisations, like the UAW, peace and international cooperation had become a primary concern of mothers due to the impact of war on children. The opposition to the testing and proliferation of nuclear weapons was directly related to this cause. In 1952 UAW Secretary of the NSW Branch, Joyce Egan, wrote: 'Our children of the world, our children of Australia, "need peace as the flowers need sunlight"'.[18]

Opposition to apartheid, colonialism and the condemnation of other forms of racial oppression was a prominent feature of UAW campaigns that made an appeal to women as mothers. The UAW's mantra of equality further extended to the opposition of economic disparity between the rich and the poor across the world. Maternalism dictated that a woman's assumed nurturing disposition and motherly compassion should extend across barriers of class and cultural differences. Although 'mainstream' women's organisations manifested this idea through charity and altruism, within communist organisations this logic was extended to purport that the suffering of children caused by wealth disparities would naturally lead compassionate women to support socialism.[19] Despite equality

[15] Vivian Hallinan, 'The Hummingbird and the Hawk', *Every Woman*, June 1956, p. 8, z236, Box 125, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[16] '"I won't Let my Sons be Conscripted" Says Mother', *Guardian,* 29 March 1951, 7.
[17] Booklet: *10th Anniversary of the Women's International Democratic Federation,* c. 1955, p. 3, z326, Box 6, NBAC, ANU.
[18] Joyce Egan, 'Letter from the Secretary', *Every Woman,* July 1952, p. 2, z236, Box 125, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[19] Communist Party Policy for Women, c. early 1960s, Item 11/4 1976:0028, Box 3, CPA Victoria State Committee, UMA.

between the sexes being a primary motivator for the UAW and its contemporaries, left-wing maternalism was not usually framed in such a way as to encourage women to fight for equality so that their daughters might enjoy more opportunities and exceed the aspirations of their mothers. Rather, maternalism was more often employed in the fight for gender equality by advocating the economic emancipation of mothers, so that they might freely care for their families and participate in civic life for the advancement of their children's interests. Most discussion around the next generations focused on the 'full and happy lives' children would lead in the future if peace were assured. Consistent with communist philosophy, gender politics were dismissed as a bourgeois folly which negated the achievement of true equality, no matter a person's sex, race or, above all, class. Although the concept of the collective 'sisterhood' was yet to be popularised by the Women's Liberation Movement – discussed in the following chapter – socialist based women's groups forged relationships through a sense of common purpose, the 'universality of motherhood' and the facilitation of the WIDF.

The first National Conference of the UAW in 1956 received greetings from women's groups around the world, including England, India, America, Finland, the USSR, New Zealand, Canada, China, Roumania, Hungary and Indonesia.[20] This public display of international friendship was leveraged by the UAW in promoting its anticolonial, peace and racial harmony campaigns. In 1964 the UAW reported on Enid Hampson's attendance at the Conference of Women in Indonesia, focusing on common goals and the feelings of friendship displayed towards the Australian people by the Indonesian women.[21] The UAW fostered a close relationship with Gerwani – the Indonesian affiliate of the WIDF. In 1962 the national presidents of the UAW and Gerwani issued a joint statement condemning Dutch colonialism in West Irian as a threat to world peace.[22]

In comparison to larger, more mainstream women's groups like the CWA or the YWCA, the UAW was a modest organisation. However, its engagement with the international women's movement for peace and socialism on the basis of maternal solidarity engendered a much broader scope in activities than its size would suggest. Minutes of a meeting of the National Executive for 1962 contain 17 out of 29 recommendations referring to international matters.[23] Many of these pertain to the UAW's affiliation to the WIDF, but also include engagement with ALP leader Arthur Calwell on matters of foreign policy and various connections to foreign women's organisations, as well as protests, support-seeking and overtures to organisations connected to the UN. A cross-section of meeting minutes and resolutions show that this ratio of domestic and international matters was fairly consistent from the

[20] NAA: A612/16, 1174, 165, Report on First National Conference of the UAW, 30 November 1956, p. 1.
[21] UAW Newsletter (Vic), September 1964, p. 5, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[22] 'Joint Statement of the Indonesian Women's Movement "Gerwani" and the Union of Australian Women – "UAW"', 3 January 1962, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[23] Decisions of National Executive Meeting of UAW, 10-11 February 1962, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

mid-1950s and throughout the 1960s, although large campaigns like 'Mother and Child' or state and federal elections sometimes stimulated a greater focus on domestic issues.[24]

The UAW's internationalist outlook was not exclusively tied to maternalism. As a socialist organisation, the UAW viewed the economic focus on social services and community amenities of foreign governments as educative for Australian housewives. The UAW compared figures with other countries to demonstrate the ways in which Australia was falling behind in terms of social services.[25] The Australian education system was unfavourably compared to other 'highly developed countries' – the USA, the USSR and Great Britain – to demonstrate the need for improvement.[26] A 1965 newsletter featured price comparisons for basic foodstuffs sent from a UAW member visiting London.[27]

These comparisons served to highlight the viability of raising the Australian standard of living. Placing Australia within the international context was also a way to lend authority to the UAW's positions. Throughout the 1950s and as late as 1966, the UAW buttressed its call for equal pay by further pleading with the Australian government to ratify the ILO's Convention 100 for equal pay.[28] The UAW often cited its policies as being 'in step' with the UN, implying that the Australian government was not.[29] The UAW's reliance on UN policy as a benchmark by which the Menzies government could be unfavourably compared was indicative of its view that, while its policies were not popularly received within Australia, they were the policies which would eventually guarantee Australia's prosperity. This global perspective was spurred by the UAW's close affiliation to the WIDF throughout the 1950s and 1960s, though not without some resistance.

Local and global perspectives: divisions within the UAW

The UAW's organisational relationship to the Women's International Democratic Federation was as integral to its policy formation and general philosophy as its relationship to the Communist Party of Australia. [30] Although the UAW was formed on the impetus of the CPA, the WIDF would come to exemplify the objectives and aspirations of the UAW as a progressive women's organisation

[24] See for example: Minutes of Executive Meeting of the UAW (NSW), 6 January 1954; Decisions Arising from Management Committee Meeting (NSW), 26 January 1955, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU; Minutes of National Executive Meeting of the UAW, 7 August 1958; Minutes of Meeting of National Executive of the UAW, 21 April 1961; Minutes of Executive Meeting (Vic), 19 July 1966, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[25] Minutes of UAW National Executive Committee, 27 April 1958, p. 1, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records VU.
[26] UAW Newsletter (Vic), July 1965, p. 1, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[27] UAW Newsletter (Vic), May 1965, p. 2, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[28] UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1966, p. 2, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[29] See for example: Resolutions of Annual Meeting of the UAW (NSW), 18 October 1958, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[30] 'Our Links with Women of the Whole World', *Our Women,* Anniversary Issue 1963, p. 16, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections; *Victorian Section, Union of Australian Women, 1950-1970*, c. early 1970s, p. 1, 6.2.1 Vic Section UAW 1950-1970, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

throughout the period. Unlike the UAW's connection to the Party, affiliation to the WIDF was widely publicised and explained. UAW members were encouraged to familiarise themselves with the WIDF through frequent articles, reports and circulation of the WIDF's publication *Women of the Whole World.*[31] In 1954 *Every Woman* included a report on the activities of then UAW representative to the WIDF, Betty Reilly: 'We should be proud to be a part of W.I.D.F. and proud also to think that our representative is taking part in helping to shape this work, so vital to women for the gaining of equal status, peace and happiness'.[32] Despite routine dialogue around the WIDF at meetings and within publications, the UAW leadership appears to have struggled to instil its own enthusiasm for the international organisation within the rank and file membership.[33]

Communist influence within the UAW leadership at least ensured that WIDF affiliation was promoted as central to a meaningful contribution to improving the lives of women in Australia and around the world. In 1951, the UAW, with input from the CPA, expressed the importance of local branches in inculcating women on communist talking points like peace and disarmament.[34] However, variations of the oft asked and answered question – 'what does the WIDF stand for?'– were symptomatic of the UAW's struggle to engage its members with the broader international community and address issues which seemed distant and often unrelated to the lives of working-class Australian housewives.[35]

Local branches tended to base themselves on local interests and adapt broader national and international issues to 'local conditions', according to the Victorian Executive of the UAW. [36] In 1961 Meg Arrowsmith expressed some concern that the enthusiasm of local branch members for local issues often distracted them from participating in important decisions or forming policy. This, Arrowsmith conceded, had led to the 'isolation to some extent, between the centre and the groups.'[37] Freda Brown recalled the difficulty of explaining the relevance of international events to the UAW's rank and file membership and believed the WIDF's role internationally was underappreciated in Australia.[38] This underwhelming enthusiasm was obliquely acknowledged in 1954 when an article in

[31] See for example: UAW Annual Report (WA), 1959-1960, p. 4, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[32] 'International News', *Every Woman,* April 1954, p. 4, z236, Box 125, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[33] UAW Meeting, 20 February 1995, 6.4.6 Cassette Recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[34] 'Build the Union of Australian Women', c. 1951, pp. 2-3, 1.8 Reports/papers, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[35] See for example: UAW Newsletter (Vic), April 1964, p. 1, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections; 'International News', *Every Woman,* December 1955, p. 10, z236, Box 125, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[36] Correspondence between Victorian Branch of the UAW and National Executive of the UAW, 7 January 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Freda Brown interview with Suzanne Fabian, 17 February 1995, 6.4.6 Cassette Recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

Every Woman included the line: 'To many of us W.I.D.F. is a name. To millions of women, it is the organisation that leads the work for women all over the world.'[39]

The inconsistency in priorities between the rank-and-file membership and the communist leadership was not the only division within the UAW concerning the WIDF. It was the practice of the WIDF to aid member organisations financially in attending its sponsored events. While WIDF communications fell under the purview of the National Branch after 1956, the tendency for unilateral decision making by New South Wales based members precipitated minor tensions between branches. Victorian National Committee members expressed frustration when the National Committee rejected the WIDF's offer to finance a UAW delegate to Budapest in 1961 without consultation.[40] The Victorian Branch members argued that a delegate could have been chosen from among their ranks, while the National Committee expressed concern at the lack of time to thoroughly research and prepare a quality contribution to the Congress. Although by available accounts there was a 'good relationship between branches' during the 1950s and into the 1960s, the occasional tensions which boiled over between the Victorian and NSW based branches (including the National Branch) were sparked more than once by the perception of Victorian members that decision making around international issues was less than democratic.[41] Nevertheless, all executive branches of the UAW continued to express reverence towards affiliation with the WIDF, using the concepts of maternalism and internationalism in the attempt to forge interest and solidarity among the UAW's rank and file membership.

The UAW and the WIDF: ideological ties and the 'Rights of the Child'

The Victorian branch of the UAW has identified the WIDF's work for world peace as the motivating factor in the creation of the UAW in both Victoria and NSW.[42] We have seen that the CPA was the driving force behind the formation of the UAW. Communist Party women who were also active within the NHA, such as Betty Reilly and Daphne Gollan, recognised the benefit of a broader women's movement encompassing housewives and working women when interacting with the WIDF and affiliate organisations in Europe.[43] The UAW took up the task of promoting the WIDF immediately upon its foundation. The UAW was at pains to establish itself within the international

[39] 'International News', *Every Woman,* April 1954, p. 4, z236, Box 125, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[40] Interbranch Correspondence between from Hilda Smith to Pat Elphinston, c. 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[41] For example, the events which resulted in Victorian members Meg Arrowsmith and Hilda Smith losing office after opposing Freda Brown and the official policy of the UAW on the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in 1963, described in Chapter Two. Alma Moreton and Meg Arrowsmith have raised questions regarding democratic decision making and divisions between Victorian and NSW based National Branch: Alma Moreton interview with Jodi Ellis, 26 February 1985; Alma Moreton interview with Suzanne Fabian, 5 August 1994; Meg Arrowsmith interview with Jodi Ellis, 16 October 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette Recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[42] *Victorian Section, Union of Australian Women, 1950-1970*, c. early 1970s, p. 1, 6.2.1 Vic Section UAW 1950-1970, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[43] Simic, 'Butter not Bombs', 07.3; Fabian and Loh, *Left-Wing Ladies,* 18.

community while presenting affiliation to the WIDF and active involvement in its campaigns as advantageous to its own membership. Although the UAW valued its connection to the WIDF, individual members expressed some criticism of its approach. For example, Meg Arrowsmith, in a 1984 interview, expressed cynicism towards the WIDF's dialogue around 'the mystique of motherhood', deriding the description of women as the 'givers of life' as grandiose.[44] Further, in direct contradiction to statements later made by Freda Brown, Arrowsmith has asserted that the WIDF was heavily influenced by the Soviet Union, about which other members recalled having 'reservations.'[45]

Like the UAW in Australia, the WIDF was sympathetic to communism and the USSR. Though the organisation did not claim official support for the Soviet Union in deference to political neutrality, WIDF literature exhibited admiration for Soviet socialism and its progress in raising women's status in the USSR.[46] Milner writes that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was instrumental in grooming Freda Brown for leadership within the WIDF, suggesting that its influence within the international organisation was considerable.[47] Prior to Brown's 1963 appointment as Vice President of the WIDF, the UAW had been represented at WIDF events by senior Party member Betty Reilly, indicating the CPA's preference for experienced and loyal communists to liaise between the UAW and WIDF.[48]

In 1955 ASIO reported the content of a Communist Party women's meeting in Melbourne, during which the anonymous speaker described the WIDF as a 'school for action for C. P. of A. women' and went on to connect the WIDF, the CPA, the UAW and the World Peace Council.[49] The objectives of peace and anti-colonialism present within the WIDF's message were referential to the brand of international communism disseminated around the globe by the Comintern's more exclusive post-war replacement, the Cominform.[50] The Cominform's journal, *For a lasting peace, for a people's democracy*, is attributed by ASIO as stating:

[44] Meg Arrowsmith interview with Jodi Ellis, 16 October 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette Recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[45] Meg Arrowsmith and Hilda Smith interview with Jodie Ellis, 16 October 1984; Freda Brown interview with Suzanne Fabian, 17 February 1995; UAW Meeting, 20 February 1995, 6.4.6 Cassette Recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[46] See for example: Booklet: *Women's International Democratic Federation, 1945-1965,* c. 1965, p. 25; WIDF, 'Documents and Information', Special Issue for the 100th Anniversary of the birth of V. I. Lenin, c. 1970, z236, Box 5, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[47] Milner, *Swimming Against the Tide,* 95.
[48] 'International News', *Every Woman,* April 1954, p. 4, z236, Box 125, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[49] NAA: A6122/16, 1174, 74, Report on CPA Meeting for Women Members, 9 November 1955.
[50] Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia,* 102.

> Women comprise one-half of mankind and in the organised peace front they are a powerful force…the success of the world-wide movement for peace depends, in great measure, on the active participation of women.[51]

While the WIDF sought to proselytise peace, disarmament and decolonisation, the central focus of the organisation was promoting how these issues were relevant to women.[52]

In 1951 UAW members were challenged to participate in the World Peace Council's 'five power peace pact' campaign, presented as a 'world campaign in defence of children…initiated by those wonderful women of the WIDF'.[53] The peace pact campaign was also featured in the *Guardian*, although it was presented as the initiative of the Australian Peace Council and was not framed as a campaign to protect children.[54] The idea of petitioning the governments of five influential and powerful nations to alter significantly their approach to diplomacy and their individual foreign policies 'in defence of children' was certainly a strategy designed to appeal to women as mothers. It was also humanitarian. More significantly, however, the WIDF's framing of the 'five power peace pact' campaign as 'in defence of children', implicitly informed women that they had the authority to bring this perspective to the attention of world leaders as mothers and citizens. The UAW was very much in favour of this perspective, declaring in 1952, 'the protection of our children is the first responsibility of any government.'[55] While the rights of the child had been enshrined within the Geneva Declaration for the Rights of the Child in 1924, the UN General assembly adopted its own Declaration in 1959.[56] The UAW celebrated the expansion of dialogue around the rights of the child, pointing out that 'unlike other sections of the community, children cannot speak up for themselves…is it not our responsibility to speak on their behalf?'[57]

The centring of children in political discourse is further evidence of the changing social mores of the post war era, with children being viewed less as adjuncts to their parents and more as vulnerable dependents who would one day contribute to society. In 1958, the UAW declared:

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[51] Cited in NAA: A6122/16, 1174, 78, Report on Front Organisations, October 1955, p. 7.
[52] Booklet: *Women's International Democratic Federation 1945-1965*, c. 1965, z236, Box 5, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[53] Secretaries Report of First Annual Conference, 8 November 1951, p. 5, 1.8 Reports/papers, UAW Records VU Special Collections.
[54] 'Sign, Distribute, Petition for 5-Power Peace Pact', *Guardian,* 21 March 1951, 3.
[55] UAW Annual Conference (NSW) Declaration, 1952, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[56] Booklet: *Rights of the Child Seminar,* Sponsored by the UAW and the NSW Teacher's Federation, 27 June 1964, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[57] UAW Annual Meeting (QLD), 31 October 1959, p. 1, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

> The United Nations report on the harmful, destructive effects of radiation, particularly in relation to the lives of our children and all the children of the world, has confirmed our worst fears for the safety of mankind.[58]

Hilda Smith has confirmed that UAW women with varying levels of sympathy for communism were motivated to campaign for peace, against the backdrop of fear for their children's future.[59] Despite the concerns around children's health spurring women to action within the politically minded UAW, the Executive conceded in 1959 that this issue was not 'uppermost in women's minds' within the wider community. The UAW intended to amplify the importance of disarmament by demonstrating clear links to economic issues effecting women.[60] While women already politicised by the UAW through affiliation to the WIDF were receptive to the urgency of internationally based issues, many Australian women did not yet look beyond their own borders, where their immediate economic needs appeared far more pressing. The UAW set about the task of convincing these women that any problem they could name was likely the result of a world on the precipice of war.

Peace and disarmament: Linking Australian issues to world affairs

> We condemn the war preparations of the Menzies Government which can only result in higher prices, rationing, higher taxation, wage pegging, longer hours, greater profits and the conscription of Australian youth for American aggression against the peoples of Asia.[61]

Peace was unambiguously the UAW's flagship international issue.[62] In accordance with the WIDF's emphasis on peace and disarmament, and the agenda set out for the UAW by the Communist Party, the UAW publicised 'peace' as its highest priority.[63] Australian involvement in the Korean War and the reintroduction of conscription in 1951 heightened fears of a new world war, closer than ever to Australian shores. When coupled with the Menzies government's thwarted attempt to criminalise communist organisations, the UAW viewed Australian war preparations with mistrust and cynicism. Throughout the period, the UAW affiliated to or otherwise closely collaborated with peace

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[58] Resolutions of the Annual Meeting of the UAW (NSW), 18 October 1958, p. 1, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[59] Hilda Smith interview with Jodi Ellis, 14 August 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette Recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[60] Correspondence from National Executive to Branches, 3 June 1959, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[61] Resolution on World Peace, First UAW Conference (NSW), 25-27 August 1950, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[62] Address by Lucy Barnes to Annual Meeting of the UAW, 20 October 1962, p. 7, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[63] See: Booklet: *10th Anniversary of the Women's International Democratic Federation,* c. 1955, z326, Box 6, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU; NAA: A6122/16, 1174, 112, report, 'C. P. of A. Women's Cadres' Meeting', 19 June 1956, pp. 2-6; 'Build the Union of Australian Women, c. 1951, p. 1, 1.8 Reports/papers, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

organisations both local and international, including the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, SOS, Youth Against Conscription, the Australian-New Zealand (or ANZ) Congress for International Co-operation and Disarmament and the Australian Peace Council (including its various state branches).[64] By design the UAW's peace activism and its public rhetoric surrounding this issue closely resembled the narrative and peace activities of the CPA. Like the CPA, the UAW contextualised a range of campaign issues through the lens of peace activism, from moral decay and civil liberties to inflation and wage freezes.

In 1950 the UAW declared: 'Peace is the most important link in our chain of activities.'[65] This statement underscores the diverse array of campaign issues which the UAW claimed could be addressed through the achievement of peace throughout the world. Naturally, the UAW emphasised how war and peace directly affected women and, more specifically, Australian working-class women. For example, in 1951 the UAW asserted that the reduction of women's wages by the Federal Government was part of an effort to conscript funds for use by the Armed Services in preparation for war. The UAW linked the exploitation of women workers to the government's plan to use women for the 'production of war materials.'[66] Working class housewives were told that the reason they could not afford basic necessities for their children was similarly due to the government's military budget.[67] Through its work around peace and disarmament, the UAW wove a narrative which bound Australia's national interests to world affairs and stood in direct opposition to the Menzies government's defence-oriented brand of internationalism.

The UAW contended that if the Australian government were to embrace a peace-driven foreign policy, materials collected for war preparations, such as lead, copper, steel, cement and piping could be diverted to the construction of hospitals, schools and houses to ease the shortage of services and the 'housing crisis.'[68] The political rhetoric of the Menzies government made it clear that war was at least a possibility in response to the spread of communism. The threat of nuclear war in the 1950s was a widespread cause of anxiety among Australians and around the world.[69] The women of the UAW were no different, frequently voicing alarm over the possibility of a third world war. However, instead of concerns over Soviet aggression, or the fall of South East Asia to communist forces, the UAW believed that the arms race in addition to 'the strongly armed West Germany' and the 'touchy' situation in Berlin were precipitating these tensions. The solution proffered by the UAW included a

[64] Annual Report, UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1966, p. 5, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[65] UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1950, p. 1, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[66] Resolution on Women's Wages, UAW (NSW), 1951, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[67] Decisions of the UAW National Executive, 21 January 1961, p. 2, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[68] Resolutions (NSW), 1951, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[69] Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties,* 91.

list of conditions which it believed would lead to world peace. These included: total disarmament, the abolition of nuclear weapons, solving 'all international problems by negotiation' and the withdrawal of all foreign troops and bases worldwide, and the signing of a peace treaty between East and West Germany which affirmed the legitimacy of existing boundaries.[70] These conditions were based upon the 1959 resolution on disarmament adopted by the UN and the socialist-driven policy of the WIDF.[71] The UAW ensured that these points were forwarded to its members, who may otherwise not have knowledge of them.

The UAW stressed the need for Australians to educate themselves on world politics and to pressure the government to support the de-escalation of tensions in Europe. In 1951 the NSW branch of the UAW called upon women of all political and religious backgrounds to 'unite and fight for peace', for the protection of children, women and their families.[72] In 1959, the Western Australian branch of the UAW described peace and disarmament as the basic requirements to advance society. The WA annual report stated:

> The far reaching changes taking place in the world do not leave our country and people untouched, and the Union of Australian Women is showing it is equal to the job of helping women to understand the era in which they live and to take an effective part in it. The great longing for a truly peaceful and disarmed world is finding expression among more and more people. Women and mothers are becoming more firm in their resolve that never again will the world be plunged into the barbarism of war, and that all means of waging it will be abolished.[73]

Consistent with its overarching mandate, the UAW's public dialogue around peace was overlaid with the intent to educate and politicise women while working to achieve its goal. The UAW appealed to national loyalty, linking far flung political disputes to the lives of Australian women and their families. This statement effectively rebuked the idea that Australia was somehow insulated from the effects of war in Europe, while typically invoking maternal responsibility as the motivating factor to participate in the democratic process. There is a clear acknowledgement here of the increasing influence of globalisation in the lives of ordinary Australians. Notably, Prime Minister Menzies also refuted the notion that Australia could use its isolated geographic position to avoid becoming embroiled in foreign conflicts. However, Menzies argued this point to legitimise the need to

[70] Resolutions of the Annual Meeting of the UAW (Qld), November 1961, p. 1, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[71] Correspondence from the WIDF to the UAW, 'Letter of Invitation for a World Gathering of Women for Disarmament', 25 October 1951, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[72] Resolution on the Preservation of World Peace, UAW Annual Meeting (NSW), November 1951, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[73] Annual Report of the UAW (WA), 1959-1960, p. 1, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

strengthen military alliances with anti-communist governments.[74] The UAW offered an alternative solution to foreign aggression which was diametrically opposed to the Menzies government's forward defence strategy. The idea that de-escalation was a viable option in answer to the increasing political tension between 'east' and 'west' was a simple message which peace activists worked tirelessly to infiltrate into the public consciousness.

Peace activism, propriety and patriotism: a balancing act

In 1958 the UAW told its members: 'If we love Australia, as we do, then it is the patriotic duty of every woman to increase her own actions for peace, and to win other women to its cause.'[75] Consistent with this perspective, the UAW evoked a wholesome, traditionally feminine programme for peace in an attempt to popularise peace activism. The organisation routinely promoted and entered the ANZ Congress 'Princess of Peace' competition and in 1961 co-sponsored a youth fancy dress dance with the Victorian Peace Council.[76] A decade earlier, the UAW had expressed satisfaction that its own 'Peace girl competition' – a pageant meant to promote international peace – had interested women in factories. Further to this report, it was suggested that issues such as the 'Women's Appeal for Peace', opposition to the rearming of Japan and support for a ceasefire in Korea were all campaigns that, to date, had attracted women to participate in the UAW.[77] The UAW's peace work was often visible and relatable to working class housewives, in addition to young factory workers eager to participate in pageantry. In 1964 the UAW's May Day Committee suggested that the theme for its float in the parade centre around opposition to French nuclear tests, with the slogan 'Peace is our only shelter'.[78] UAW women participated, including the 'pusher brigade', which consisted of young mothers and their children riding in 'pushers' – an image commonly depicted in photographic records of the UAW. The following year, the UAW claimed the position of lead contingent in the parade, again through the visually powerful use of the 'pusher brigade', which served to remind Australian women of their maternal obligation to secure their children's future.[79]

UAW members attending Victoria's inaugural Annual Conference were encouraged to participate in the WIDF's 'peace pact' campaign, discussed above, by an appeal to match the number of signatures collected world-wide. The Victorian conference of the UAW was informed that women from India, Britain and South America had collected tens of thousands of signatures in their spare time,

[74] Andrews, *A History of Australian Foreign Policy,* 167.
[75] Executive Report from Annual Meeting of the UAW (NSW), 18 October 1958, p. 1, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[76] Interbranch Correspondence from the National Executive of the UAW to Branches, 23 July 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[77] 'Build the Union of Australian Women', c. 1951, p. 2, 1.8 Reports/papers, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[78] UAW Newsletter (Vic), April 1964, p. 6, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[79] UAW Newsletter (Vic), May 1965, p. 7, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

emphasising that UAW members represented Australia on the world stage.[80] Although these calls to match foreign counterparts in campaigning for the WIDF were framed as 'making a worthy contribution', there was also a competitive undercurrent of national pride at play.[81] This competitive spin was clearly intended to spur UAW members to action using a common psychological tactic; however, it also demonstrated the UAW's understanding of the importance of its members' cultural identity as 'Australian'.

Simic discusses the UAW's presentation of the working class 'political housewife' as quintessentially Australian in her examination of *Our Women*.[82] Cold War political bias and widespread xenophobia heightened the need for the UAW to emphasise its Australian identity in order to mitigate the perception that it was part of a 'fifth column'. An article in the Adelaide *Advertiser*, for example, described Australian communists as 'extremists whose spiritual home is in Moscow'.[83] UAW member Edith Morgan has described a perceived need among communists in the UAW to 'keep respectable' in order to combat prejudice within the community.[84] In emphasising its contribution to international campaigns as 'team Australia', the UAW promoted peace activism through a patriotic lens. However, as Meg Arrowsmith lamented, 'a cold wind was blowing on progressive ideas' during the Menzies era.[85]

Cold War politics, playing out in Europe, America and closer to home in South East Asia, spurred the conservative Menzies government to promote a narrative which framed war preparations as defensive. The Australian military engaged in conflicts in Korea, Malaya, Indonesia and Vietnam throughout the 1950s and 1960s to stall the spread of communism. Simultaneously, the Menzies government was shoring up alliances like the Pacific Security Treaty between Australia, New Zealand and the United States (ANZUS) and the Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO) and facilitating the controversial rearmament of Japan. The UAW was highly critical of these actions, informing the WIDF of its intentions to vehemently challenge the Federal Government in any way it could.[86] UAW protests against the rearmament of Japan departed from their usual message of international friendship and cooperation. The organisation took a fear-based approach to the issue, exploiting Australian's collective memory of Japanese aggression during World War II to paint Japan as dangerous and

[80] Secretaries Report of First Annual Conference, 8 November 1951, p. 6, 1.8 Reports/papers, UAW Records VU Special Collections.
[81] Editorial, *Every Woman,* April-May, 1955, p. 1, z236, Box 125, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[82] Simic, 'Butter not Bombs', 07.6.
[83] 'Disarmament', *The Advertiser,* 19 June 1953, 2.
[84] UAW Meeting, 20 February 1995, 6.4.6 Cassette Recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[85] Meg Arrowsmith interview with Jodi Ellis, 16 October 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette Recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[86] Correspondence, from the UAW National Secretary to the Secretary of the WIDF, 22 September 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

untrustworthy.[87] However, the UAW was at pains to emphasise the resistance of many Japanese people to 'the revival of militarism in their country'.[88]

The UAW condemned SEATO, pointing out that the treaty excluded Indonesia, China and India – consequently dividing South East Asia further. Additionally, the UAW expressed concern that the terms of the treaty obligated Australia to provide military aid to treaty nations and might require engagement in war, without discussion in Parliament – further equating Menzies' 'war policies' with the degradation of democracy.[89] In 1961 the UAW commented: 'It has been increasingly evident that our Government's foreign policy is not in the interests of the vast majority of people'.[90] The UAW protested against the Vietnam War as early as 1963, when the public was largely disengaged from the issue.[91] By the mid-1960s, opposition to the war in Vietnam was gaining momentum. In celebration of IWD in 1966, the UAW noted the increased activity of women in voicing their disapproval of Australian involvement in Vietnam: 'Women know that above all they must have peace to realise both security and happiness as their struggles today against conscription, war toys, war in Vietnam testify.'[92] However, while the UAW's efforts to frame peace activism as a maternal responsibility appealed to its own members, the organisation struggled to entrench this notion beyond its own base.

In 1958 the UAW identified potential support coming from women's organisations associated with religious institutions, the Returned Services League (RSL) and sporting bodies in opposition to nuclear weapons and nuclear testing. Citing a report by the UN regarding the deleterious effects of the hydrogen bomb on children, the UAW urged Australian women to join it in condemning nuclear testing at the Woomera Rocket Range and Maralinga.[93] The UAW sent letters to numerous NSW based women's organisations explaining their position on peace and the economy in 1960, including the National Council of Women, the YWCA and the CWA.[94] However, the issue of world peace was simply too controversial during the 1950s and even into the early 1960s to draw the involvement of mainstream groups. Even Labor politicians and clergy were publicly labelled as communist sympathisers when demonstrating support for peace activities during the early 1950s.[95] A letter to the

[87] See for example: Resolution on the Preservation of World Peace, UAW (NSW), 1951, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[88] 'When Working for Peace, Know your Enemies', *Our Women,* March-May 1961, p. 23, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[89] Report on the World Congress of Women to the 1954 Annual Meeting of the UAW (NSW), 1954, p. 5, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[90] UAW Annual Report (NSW) 1960-1961, p. 1, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[91] NAA: A6122/45, 1622, 186, Report on Third National Conference of UAW, 14 November 1963; Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties,* 131.
[92] UAW Newsletter (Vic), March 1966, p. 1, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[93] Resolutions of UAW (NSW) Annual Meeting, 18 October 1958, p. 1, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[94] Interbranch Correspondence from National Committee of the UAW to Branches and Affiliates, 7 October 1960, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[95] 'Peace Council Seen as Communist', *Examiner,* 19 May 1953, 3.

Sydney Morning Herald in 1951 rebutted calls for a peaceful foreign policy, summing up the opinion of Menzies' support base:

> "Great force for peace" and "traditions of the majority" did not save us during the last war. It was American strength plus Australian courage…America and only America can save us from the teeming millions who have always coveted Australia.[96]

Alison Dickie has recalled that during the 1950s, Melbourne UAW members were forced to leave the offices of the CWA when the latter organisation called the police to report the presence of the communist aligned women and their distribution of leaflets publicising peace.[97] In 1962, the UAW was directing its members to answer 'widely publicised' accusations of communism from the RSL by reminding the public that Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo were anti-communists too.[98] The stigma of communist association and the anti-war stance taken by Australian socialists all but guaranteed that the women of the UAW would find little support among mainstream organisations. By 1965, the *Canberra Times* reported that support for an arms ban was increasing; however, the issue was framed as reliant on the Soviet Union's reasonable response to American negotiation.[99] Despite consistent public action in the fight for peace, the UAW's efforts were largely ignored during their monthly peace marches, and by the subsequent literature on the Australian peace movement.

The UAW's place within the Australian Peace Movement and the impact of anti-communism and gender bias on its message

That the UAW's substantial efforts promoting peace have been largely overlooked is, most likely, due to two factors: politics and gender.[100] O'Lincoln has acknowledged the UAW's early contribution to the peace movement but speculates that the organisation was simply ahead of its time in undertaking monthly peace walks in the Melbourne CBD and other capital cities.[101] This assessment of the UAW as 'ahead of its time' can be applied to the breadth of its peace work in collaboration with the CPA, including its perspective on international relations. For example, the UAW's declaration that Australian foreign policy was 'out of step with world and especially Afro-Asian opinion' coincided with the policy shift engineered by the Whitlam government in the ensuing decade.[102] Despite prolific

[96] Letter on Australian Foreign Policy to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 February 1951, 2.
[97] Alison Dickie interview with Jodi Ellis, 31 July 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette Recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[98] Address to the 1962 Annual Meeting of the UAW (NSW), 20 October 1962, p. 15, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[99] 'America Awaits Soviet Reaction Over Disarmament', *The Canberra Times,* 25 September 1965, 6.
[100] In a broader context, Zora Simic has identified these factors – named as anti-feminism and anti-communism – as key to the marginalisation of the UAW from mainstream appeal during the 1950s and 1960s, and from subsequent historic literature related to the period; Simic, 'Butter not Bombs', 07.1-07.15.
[101] O'Lincoln, 'Against the stream', 94-95.
[102] Decisions of the National Executive of the UAW, 21 January 1961, p. 2, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections; 'Foreign Affairs', *The Whitlam Institute within Western Sydney University,* 2018, https://www.whitlam.org/whitlam-legacy-foreign-affairs

and long-term peace activities – including initiating campaigns, canvassing petitions, writing letters, sending delegations, holding functions, raising funds, attending conferences, publishing literature, issuing press releases, and holding public demonstrations – the UAW does not hold a prominent position within the history of the Australian peace movement. Although the tendency to dismiss the UAW and organisations like it – based on either affiliation to the CPA, the gender of its membership, or both – has been manifested through historiographical underrepresentation, it was of course cultivated during the early decades of the Cold War.

In 1957 five West Australian UAW members were charged, convicted and fined for 'carrying a printed notice in the metropolitan area without the written permission of the Commissioner of Police'. The 'notices' in question were scarves and pins featuring messages of protest against nuclear testing. The UAW argued that police discretion was applied unevenly to different issues, suggesting that previous protests around high prices had been ignored.[103] This incident exempilifies the legal ramifications stemming from UAW peace activities. Many UAW members recalled public ridicule directed at them during the course of their public peace activities, the content of which was both gendered and anti-communist.[104] Some members have also conceded that they did not attract new participants to their public demonstrations throughout the 1950s, due to the perceived outlandish nature of such forms of protest.[105] The perception of left-wing peace activists – and especially women – as non-conforming troublemakers or at least naïve ideologues manipulated by foreign subversion, was consistent with the social and political milieu of Menzies era Australia.

While common prejudices demonising communists and infantilising women ensured that the UAW's message about peace was given little gravity by the Australian public or the media, the organisation continued its peace activities generally unhindered. Although UAW members encountered anti-communist sentiment in the community, many were travelling regularly to locations like the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary and China throughout the 1950s and 1960s. ASIO was in possession of an 'Overseas Travel Notification' pertaining to Noreen Hewett's 1959 trip to China detailed in Chapter Two, but Hewett was not prevented from taking the trip. Hewett's membership of the CPA and UAW is noted on the document.[106] The UAW, in the company of the Victorian Peace Council Executive, hosted members of a 'Soviet cultural delegation' in December 1959 and welcomed numerous guests from behind the Iron Curtain to its various conferences – notably Soviet cosmonaut and peace activist Valentina Tereshkova, the first woman in space.[107] This freedom of travel and association challenges,

[103] Interbranch correspondence from the UAW (WA) to State Branches, 11 October 1957, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[104] Alma Moreton interview with Jodi Ellis, 27 November 1984; Alison Dickie interview with Jodi Ellis, 31 July 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette Recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[105] Eileen Cappocchi interview with Jodi Elis, 2 October 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette Recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[106] NAA: A6119, 6007, Overseas Travel Notification, 18 September 1959.
[107] NAA: AG122/45, 1917, 126, Report on Soviet Peace Delegation in Victoria, 29 January 1960.

to some extent, the notion that the Menzies government was as concerned about communist 'subversion' within Australia as its rhetoric implied, ASIO's scrutiny notwithstanding.

Deery and Mclean have presented evidence to suggest that the Menzies government was less concerned about communist peace activities than it publicly stated.[108] Indeed the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister were reluctant to deny passports to Australians travelling to the 1952 Asian and Pacific Peace Conference in Peking, before acceding to political pressure from Britain and the USA.[109] During its 1952 annual conference, the NSW Branch of the UAW referenced its 'work' to send a woman delegate to the Peking Peace Conference. Despite the Menzies government's ultimate decision to deny passports for Australians travelling to the conference from 10 September, the UAW hosted Nancy Lapwood, identified as an 'Australian missionary in China and delegate to the Asian and Pacific Peace Conference'. Although Lapwood's introduction as a 'visiting speaker' suggests she was not a UAW member, her comments regarding China's positive progress under communism and the UAW's reference to its 'work' to send a woman delegate to the conference indicate that Lapwood was likely previously known to and approached by the UAW to attend the conference in order to circumvent the passport ban, as she was already in place.[110] This apparent manoeuvring to ensure participation in the international peace movement on behalf of Australian housewives demonstrates the UAW's ingenuity and strategic use of its networks in the face of anti-communist sanctions.

Despite the lack of attention to UAW peace activities by the general public or by later scholars of the Australian peace movement, the UAW was prolific in its individual and collaborative peace activism, as shown by both the meticulous reporting of ASIO and the UAW's own records and publications. Like many of the UAW's activities undertaken in the spirit of politicisation, the specific success of its campaigns was minimal. However, the UAW's contribution to the peace movement likely had some bearing on attitudes towards peace and peace activism among working class women. The UAW itself has not shied away from claiming credit for its role in the peace movement. In 1953 the President of the NSW Branch of the UAW, Lucy Barnes, declared: 'We welcome the ceasefire in Korea and feel that the activity of our women in petitioning the United Nations and our government for a ceasefire, helped to bring about this situation.'[111] More recently, while Freda Brown shared O'Lincoln's interpretation of the UAW as 'ahead of its time', the former UAW and WIDF President has further contended that this marked UAW peace activists as pioneers, instrumental in normalising public demonstrations in Australia. Through its peace activism, the UAW did not seek recognition and largely did not receive it. It was merely upholding its commitment to the international peace

[108] Phillip Deery and Craig Mclean, 'Behind Enemy Lines. Menzies, Evatt and Passports for Peking', *The Round Table*, 92/370 (2003) 407-422 at 408.
[109] Deery and Mclean, 'Behind Enemy Lines', 413.
[110] Report on UAW Annual Conference (NSW), 1952, pp. 1-2, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[111] Report of the President to the Annual Conference of the UAW (NSW), 1953, p. 4, z326, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.

movement and the WIDF and, perhaps more importantly, holding a candle for peace alongside other marginalised organisations until the movement gained enough momentum to become successful during the course of the Vietnam War.

The UAW and World Politics: Critical of the United States, Obeisant to the Soviet Union.

Bloomfield and Nossal have argued that anti-American sentiment was fostered during the 1950s within the ALP, for reasons of policy and ideology.[112] They claim the inherent injustice and potential 'global instability' resulting from the USA's political domination of western powers was inconsistent with Opposition Leader H.V. Evatt's liberal internationalist world view. The UAW exhibited anti-Americanism, not only as a communist organisation but also as an organisation dedicated to progressive internationalism and an independent Australian national identity distinct from its colonial past. However, the UAW's dual motivation in taking a political stance against the USA was counter-productive to the receptivity of its message. From a leftist perspective, there were many legitimate reasons to oppose American foreign policy during the 1950s and 1960s. However, the UAW's anti-American rhetoric was overlaid with an unwillingness to criticise those opposed to American policy, chiefly the Soviet Union. When the UAW national body was formed, the idea that the organisation must shed its reputation as a communist front was strongly emphasised by the CPA and women's cadres within the UAW.[113] However, the UAW was unable to do so in large part due to its anti-American, pro-Soviet political position.

In 1962 a delegation representing the UAW and affiliate organisations travelled to Parliament House to petition Australian politicians and foreign diplomats to support peace and disarmament. The UAW described the US embassy as having 'accepted the resolution via a junior official, who was polite but had no comment except to pass on reading material on US policy'. This is contrasted by reporting on the experience of UAW delegates at the Soviet embassy, whereby: 'all were invited in and seated comfortably, unlike other embassies.'[114] The UAW delegation was reportedly 'convinced' by the embassy staff that the Soviet Union was treated unfairly by the USA. The Russian diplomats argued that the US government's insistence on inspecting all Soviet instillations and weaponry, without reciprocation under the same terms with the USSR, was unacceptable. However, the claim that the UAW delegation needed to be 'convinced' of the Soviet's position is dubious. The previous year, the UAW had released an appeal to women justifying the Soviet Union's resumption of nuclear testing against a 1959 resolution of the UN General Assembly, by accusing the USA and West Germany of provocation. The UAW then renewed calls for disarmament and the cessation of nuclear testing by

[112] Alan Bloomfield and Kim Richard Nossal, 'End of an Era? Anti-Americanism in the Australian Labor Party', *Australian Journal of Politics and History,* 56/4 (2010), 592-611 at 596.
[113] NAA: A6122/16, 1174, report, 'C. P. of A. Women's Cadres' Meeting', 19 June 1956, pp. 2-6.
[114] Report on the Peace Delegation to Canberra, 8 May 1962, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

calling for a peace treaty recognising East German sovereignty.[115] Whether the UAW was aware of its own political blind spot or was 'towing the party line' is unclear.

While the UAW's perspective on 'American imperialism' was certainly based upon valid criticisms of US foreign policy, the organisation limited its condemnation of hostile foreign military interventions and the subversion of democracy to the USA and its allies. In 1950 the UAW declared: 'We are all horrified by the stated intentions of the US aggressors in Korea to wipe out the population, cities, industries and communications of North Korea.'[116] The UAW described the US bombing campaign in North Korea as 'murder' and urged its members to send protests to the American embassy in addition to the Prime Minister and opposition leader. The language employed here and elsewhere by the UAW left no doubt about which nation the organisation viewed as responsible for escalating tensions around the globe. In 1961 the UAW National Executive proposed a deputation to the US embassy with the theme 'Stay out of other people's countries', specifically naming Cuba, Laos and the Congo.[117] The UAW accused the USA of widening the war with Vietnam and rejected US rhetoric justifying 'horror weapons' in 1965.[118] In 1961 the UAW wrote on America's culpability for the failed Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba: 'The United States violated the principle of the right of nations to determine their own way of life, and has been justly condemned by people all over the world'.[119]

The UAW was largely silent on military intervention by the Soviet Union within its 'satellite states'. This hypocrisy served to undermine the veracity of its legitimate claims regarding American military action and political manipulation of foreign powers. While the UAW declared that 'no thinking person can ignore [the] USA's escalation of the war in Vietnam', it did not publicly question the Soviet Union's use of force against Hungary in 1956.[120] In February 1957, around three months after the Soviet invasion of Hungary, the UAW noted during a meeting that it sent letters of 'sympathy and moral support' to the women of Egypt and Hungary, without further elaboration.[121] During an audio-recording of conversation between UAW members with Suzane Fabian and Morag Loh in 1995, the members present reached a consensus that the invasion of Hungary was not brought up within the UAW. However, one unidentified member recalled 'tensions' around the issue, which may have caused some members to leave.[122] Regardless of individual members' personal feelings, there is little evidence that the UAW addressed Hungary on an organisational level, despite its commitment to self-determination of all nations and prior support for independence movements. The UAW's rhetoric cast

[115] UAW Leaflet: 'Appeal to Women', c. 1961, 1.3 Meeting Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[116] UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1950, 2., 4.2.1, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[117] Minutes of UAW National Executive Meeting, 21-22 April 1961, 1.3 Meeting Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[118] Minutes of National Committee Meeting, 3-4 April, 1965, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[119] 'Spotlight on Cuba', *Every Woman,* April-May-June 1961, 2.
[120] UAW Annual Report (Vic), October 1966, 5., 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[121] Minutes of Management Committee Meeting of the UAW (NSW), 9 February 1957, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[122] UAW Meeting, 20 February 1995, 6.4.6 Cassette Recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

the Soviet Union as a victim of US propaganda and painted the communist state as a progressive, socially advanced and democratic utopia in frequent editorials by Freda Brown and other UAW visitors behind the Iron Curtain.[123]

While the tendency of Australian communists to ignore Soviet repression is not revelatory, the presentation of pro-Soviet propaganda to the UAW's non-communist rank and file membership certainly undermined its appeal as a mass organisation. Little evidence is available to determine the thoughts and reactions of the rank-and-file membership to the UAW's championing of the Soviet cause. However, interviews with former members suggest that women belonging to local branches largely ignored international politics unless directly connected to peace activism or Australian foreign policy, or viewed the UAW leadership's preoccupation with Soviet politics as personally irrelevant.[124] Victorian UAW member Yvonne Smith recollects feeling disapproval of articles in *Our Women* about the Soviet Union and argued with Freda Brown that the focus should be on Australia.[125]

One issue taken up by the UAW which did centre Australia within the tensions between the USA and the Soviet Union was the establishment of US military bases on Australian soil. The UAW was highly critical of the 'U-2 bases' being established in Australia by the American military. In 1962 the UAW declared: '..foreign bases in our country are a threat to our sovereignty and also endanger the security of our people', and called on the United Nations to 'bring about complete and general disarmament'.[126] The Menzies government agreed to allow the US to conduct operation 'Crowflight' from the Royal Australian Airforce base at Sale and later airstrips at Laverton and Avalon in Victoria.[127] At the time, the UAW and the Victorian Peace Council protested the approval of the 'U-2 bases' on suspicions that the US was conducting covert operations with the aircraft. In September 1962, UAW members demonstrated in Sydney, carrying daisies and handing out leaflets before reaching the US Consulate with a petition against the U-2 bases. Reminiscent of its experience in Canberra in May, the UAW described the Vice-Consul as 'very offhanded, not even inviting the women to sit down'.[128] Their protests were unsuccessful, and the operation continued until 1966. The UAW's attempts to convince the public that Australian foreign policy deferred to American military

[123] See for example: 'Mrs Brown Goes to Moscow', *Our Women,* March-May Issue, 1961, p. 20; 'Where Rents are Low', *Our Women,* October-December 1961, p. 28, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[124] UAW Meeting, 20 February 1995, 6.4.6 Cassette Recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[125] Yvonne Smith interview with Jodi Ellis, 29 September 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette Recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[126] Annual Meeting of the UAW (NSW), 20 October 1962, p. 1, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[127] Phillip Dorling, 'Atomic Spies in Southern Skies: Operation Crowflight – United States High Altitude Radiological Sampling in Australia 1960-1966', Special Reports, (15 March 2016), *Nautilus Peace and Security (NAPSnet),* Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainability, https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-special-reports/atomic-spies-in-southern-skies-operation-crowflight/, viewed 30 October 2019.
[128] Interbranch Correspondence, UAW National Committee to Branches and Affiliated Organisations, 24 September 1962, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

needs largely fell on deaf ears.[129] While ordinary Australian women were not particularly receptive to the UAW's pro-Soviet, anti-American political propaganda, criticism of the US did strike a chord when Australia's changing cultural landscape generated concerns over the influence of American media on Australian youth.

The UAW's Participation in Australia's Changing Cultural Dynamics

Simultaneous to the clash of political ideologies that sustained the Cold War, Australians were experiencing the impact of a cultural shift from traditional British influence to the introduction of American popular culture. While the United States was quickly becoming Australia's most valued political and military ally, many Australians were uneasy with the encroaching cultural influence which accompanied the closer relations.[130] Various organisations and individuals held the view that the introduction of American media and popular culture was detrimental to the moral wellbeing of Australian children.[131] Unusually for the Menzies era, consensus on this issue was reached between progressive, moderate and conservative pundits alike. Among the most vociferous critics of American comics was the Australian Communist Party. The CPA deplored the glorification of war within American comics and campaigned against the genre on the basis of the healthy cultural development of Australian youth and its anti-war platform.[132] Given that the relevant campaign areas – children and peace – were thought to be of special interest to women, the UAW adopted this campaign early.

The syndication of American comics had provoked substantial public criticism locally and internationally from the early 1950s and was linked to the emergence of the 'rebellious teenager'. Moore describes widespread concern over juvenile delinquency associated with the introduction of American popular culture as a moral panic which 'reached a fever-pitch of irrationality' in the mid-late 1950s.[133] However, the focus on 'morality' in the denunciation of American comics overshadowed more specific concerns, such as missed opportunities for Australian writers and illustrators, the spreading of misogynistic attitudes and white supremacist propaganda and the presentation of extreme violence and prejudice as heroic.[134] While the trope of 'mothers for censorship' in popular culture carries negative connotations, the UAW's reasoning behind opposition to war-oriented media was based upon historical analysis, not merely the notion of moral propriety –

[129] UAW Annual Report (NSW), 1960-61, p. 1, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[130] Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties,* 67.
[131] Correspondence from the Business and Professional Women's Club of Melbourne to the UAW (Vic), 8 October 1965; Correspondence from the Housewives Association to the UAW (Vic), 13 August 1965; Statement About OMEP [French Initials of World Organisation for Early Childhood Education] to War Toys Meeting, 27 October 1965, 5.38 War Toys, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[132] *Australia's Path to Socialism. Programme,* 18th Congress, April 1958, Item 2/5, Box 1, CPA Victorian State Committee, UMA.
[133] Keith Moore, 'Bodgies, Widgies and Moral Panic in Australia 1955-1959', Paper Presented to the Social Change in the 21st Century Conference, Centre for Social Change Research Queensland University of Technology, 29 October 2004, 4 of 13.
[134] Jeff Sparrow, 'Communists and Comic Books', *Meanjin Quarterly,* (Summer 2019).

though the latter was undeniably a factor. In 1950, the UAW argued: 'Hitler used the children to foster his plans of world conquest. The Nazis sowed in children's minds the germ of racial hatred, the admiration of a military uniform and the slogan of "guns before butter"'.[135] In 1952, echoing the oft repeated perspective of the CPA and the wider peace movement, the UAW described American comics as the 'psychological preparation [of young people] for war'.[136]

Condemnation of American comics and their influence on the cultural development of Australian children was broadly acknowledged. Sparrow cites journalists, psychologists, clergy, politicians, academics and the labour movement among those who railed against syndicated comics.[137] Mothers, of course, were both targets and advocates of efforts to reduce the influence of American popular culture on their children. While sex and violence in American media alarmed many mothers, the UAW, consistent with its communist roots, was primarily concerned with American imperialism and the glorification of war to children. In 1952 an unnamed 'American visitor' to the NSW Annual conference of the UAW reported that although 'people in America wanted peace', American children practiced air raids and wore 'dog tags.' Within the conference report, the 'American visitor' is quoted as saying: 'They are told that the metal won't melt if the body is melted by atomic bombing.'[138] The reporting of such emotive statements in relation to children served to caution mothers about the dangers of allowing American militarism to infiltrate Australian culture. In literature condemning American comics, the UAW described the contents as 'sadistic' and 'sexy'. The UAW's use of this loaded terminology in relation to children's reading material no doubt played a role in catching the attention of women around the country, helping to bring the campaign to public attention. The UAW reported that inappropriate comics for young people were smuggled through customs from America.[139] State governments attempted to regulate the circulation of comic books, with the Queensland government introducing the Objectionable Literature Bill in 1954.[140] The bi-partisan mistrust of American popular culture by an older generation of Australians continued into the 1960s.

During the 1960s fears over the debasement of Australian culture in conjunction with the 'universality of motherhood' provoked support for the UAW's stance against 'war toys.' The 'war toys' campaign was a progression of the popular denunciation of violent content in American comics.[141] The UAW initiated a collaboration between women's organisations, writing letters to retailers, manufacturers

[135] Resolutions Carried Unanimously at the Annual Meeting of the Union of Australian Women (NSW), 'In Defence of your Children', November 1951, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[136] Resolutions from the 1952 Annual Conference of the UAW (NSW Branch), z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[137] Sparrow, 'Communists and Comic Books'.
[138] Report on UAW Annual Conference (NSW), 1952, p. 2, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[139] UAW Newsletter (Vic), May 1952, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[140] Mark Finnane, 'Censorship and the Child: Explaining the Comics Campaign', *Australian Historical Studies,* 23/92 (April 1989), 220-240 at 220.
[141] See for example: Annual Report, UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1966, p. 8, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

and media outlets discouraging the display, sale, advertisement, purchase and consumption of violent content aimed at children. The UAW reiterated the damaging effects of racism and violence on the minds of children, condemning a display of enemy dolls depicted with 'Asian faces' and the sale of toy guns that 'kill in seven different ways' in 1965.[142] The UAW was able to capitalise on the momentum of the anti-comic sentiment to gain the support of women's organisations such as the Housewives Association and the Business and Professional Women's Club of Melbourne.[143] Like the backlash against comics, the 'war toys' campaign was aided by pre-existing antipathy towards the American cultural infiltration of Australian media. Although the UAW acknowledged that a small number of Australian manufacturers produced war toys, it maintained that 'the ideas in the main came from the United States'.[144]

In collaboration with the Women's Christian Temperance Union and other state women's associations, the UAW successfully consolidated opposition to 'war toys' and violent media content under one banner. Sections of the trade union movement also supported a ban on war toys, with 'unionised Santa Clauses' vowing to dissuade children from requesting war toys in 1965. The UAW encouraged this initiative and called for Actors Equity to extend the move to Victoria.[145] Many retailers responded favourably to the UAW led calls to remove war toys from display or sale, including Woolworths in WA and NSW and Spotless and its subsidiaries in Victoria.[146] In 1965 the UAW celebrated the removal of a television advertisement for a toy machine-gun, which was removed with the help of widespread condemnation, including from members of Parliament and the clergy.[147] The groundswell of support for the UAW's eponymous 'war toys' campaign highlights the paradigm shift taking place within Australian society during the Menzies era, but also illuminates the potential effectiveness of maternalist arguments. The UAW's internationalist perspective did not preclude it from guarding against outside intrusion on the cultural development of Australian youth.

The UAW asserted that Australian children had a birthright to prosperity, happiness and security by virtue of their Australian citizenship.[148] This is another example of how the UAW located Australia within both national patriotism and the broader framework of internationalism. The perceived

[142] Document titled 'War Toys', 28 April 1966, 5.38 War toys, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[143] Correspondence from H Calcutt to Eileen Capocchi, 8 October 1965; Correspondence from Secretary of Housewives Association (Vic Section) to Eileen Capocchi, 13 August, 1965, 5.38 War Toys, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[144] Document titled 'Women Unite Against War Toys', 1965, 5.38 War Toys, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[145] Correspondence from Eileen Capocchi to V Arnold, 21 October 1965, 5.38 War Toys, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[146] Correspondence from Eileen Capocchi to Women's Organisations, 12 August 1965; Correspondence from N Clarke to B Olle, 24 November 1967, 5.38 War Toys, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[147] Correspondence from M Constantine to Women's Organisations, 16 September 1965, 5.38 War Toys, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[148] Declaration of the UAW (NSW) Second Annual Conference, 1952, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.

negative effects of American cultural influence on that prosperity, happiness and security spurred the UAW and many other Australians to voice their protests against the tide of cultural change during the 1950s and 1960s. The claim that Australian children were entitled to certain conditions based upon their heritage implies exceptionalism, paradoxical to the idea of universal equality implicit in other statements made by the UAW. It is likely that the UAW did not intend this implication but was attempting to integrate the maternalist imperative for the enrichment and protection of children with the cultural identity of its members as Australian. This juxtaposition of Australian identity and global citizenship was perhaps more successfully integrated by UAW member Joyce Egan in 1952: 'As women, we have a big responsibility to our country to see that our children have the right to live in a quiet happy world, the right to a secure future, to health and to education.'[149] The UAW's effort to engage Australian working class women in international affairs and to equate Australian prosperity with global prosperity found further manifestation in fighting racial injustices domestically and internationally.

The UAW, Racial Equality and Humanitarianism

While not as historically prominent as the American civil rights or anti-apartheid movements, during the 1950s and 1960s Aboriginal Australians were fighting their own ongoing battle for political, social and legislative equality. In addition to Indigenous-led groups like the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement (FCAA), the Council for Aboriginal Rights and the Aboriginal Advancement League (AAL), organisations with a focus on civil liberties pressured the Menzies government to address racial inequality in Australia. The Communist Party adopted Indigenous rights as part of its anti-racism/anti-colonialism platform and identified Aboriginal Australians as a demographic that would benefit from socialist reform.[150] Damousi refers to communist women active in the pursuit of Aboriginal rights from as early as the 1930s, a far cry from the trend towards eugenics advocacy displayed by communist women like Adela Pankhurst in the previous decades.[151] In 1943 Women's organisations from around Australia addressed racial inequality within the Australian Women's Charter. The Charter promoted Indigenous welfare and called for an end to discrimination against Aboriginal Australians.[152] Although the involvement of the Indigenous community, women, communists and civil libertarians in the promotion of Indigenous rights was not a new phenomenon by the 1950s, the process of post-colonial globalisation assisted Indigenous activists and their allies in spurring the movement forward. Chesterman has argued that it was the combination of domestic

[149] Correspondence from Joyce Egan (UAW Secretary, NSW Branch) to UAW members, 27 October 1952, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[150] *Australia's Path to Socialism: Program of the CPA.* 16th Congress, 1951. Currant Books, January 1952, Item 2/3, Box 1; *Australia's Way Forward. Programme of the Communist Party of Australia and Agrarian Programme of the Communist Party of Australia.* Resolution for 20th Congress, Item 2/7, Box 1, CPA Victorian State Committee, UMA.
[151] Damousi, *Women Come Rally,* 156.
[152] Damousi, *Women Come Rally,* 153-154.

activism and mounting international pressure during the 1950s and 1960s which convinced the successive Liberal-Country Party governments to grant social services and citizenship rights to Aboriginal Australians respectively by the end of the 1960s.[153]

The international spotlight on Australia's discriminatory policies against Indigenous Australians was encouraged by Aboriginal rights organisations and activists. Charlie Perkins, Vice President of the FCAA, believed the attainment of civil rights for Indigenous Australians required consideration domestically and internationally in order to be successful.[154] In a 1958 essay, Brian Fitzpatrick detailed the infinitesimal legislative progress being made towards Aboriginal citizenship and emphasised the discrepancy between the lived experience of Indigenous Australians and Australia's commitment to the UN's *Declaration of Human Rights*.[155] Jessie Street challenged the Australian government to heed criticism within the UN and end discrimination in 1961, by which time the FCAA consistently petitioned the UN to address racial discrimination in Australia.[156] Street and Perkins were not the only Australians to call for UN influence in ending Australia's discriminatory policies. In 1963, *Our Women* reported that Australian pastor Doug Nicholls had made an appeal to the UN for an international inquiry into the treatment of Aboriginal Australians.[157] Chesterman provides evidence to suggest that these efforts were indeed effective in pressuring the Australian government, stimulating international organisations and diplomats of various nationalities to question Australian policy at the UN, via written communications and within the media.[158] The growing awareness of Australia's treatment of its Indigenous population was linked to the global spread of independence movements in former colonies. It was in this broader context that the UAW undertook the promotion of Aboriginal rights and contributed to the movement in the spirit of progressive internationalism.

The opening declaration of Barbara Curthoys' 1961 report on Aboriginal advancement to the UAW National Committee stated:

> At a time when colonial people everywhere are struggling and winning their independence the eyes of people all over the world are upon Australia to see what we are doing to correct the wrongs inflicted upon the original inhabitants of Australia, the Aboriginal people. [159]

[153] John Chesterman, 'Defending Australia's Reputation. How Indigenous Australians Won Civil Rights Part One', *Australian Historical Studies,* 32/16 (2001), 21 of 20-39.
[154] Chesterman, 'Defending Australia's Reputation', 34.
[155] Brian Fitzpatrick, 'Lesser Tribes without the Law', *Meanjin,* 17/4 (1958), 400-408.
[156] Chesterman, 'Defending Australia's Reputation', 32.
[157] 'Appeal to UN', *Our Women,* September-December Issue, 1963, p. 29, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[158] Chesterman, 'Defending Australia's Reputation', 33-36.
[159] Precis of Report by Barbara Curthoys to National Committee, 19 February 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

From as early as 1951, the UAW demanded that Australia's Indigenous population be afforded equal rights as citizens, equal opportunity as workers and specific consideration as a unique cultural group within Australian society, consistent with the policy of the CPA and trade unions such as the Australian Workers' Union.[160] These conditions were reiterated by UAW Committee member and Indigenous activist Pearl Gibbs in 1952, who powerfully reminded those present at the NSW State Conference: 'I am not an Australian citizen'.[161] Comparisons to independence movements and Indigenous rights movements in other countries were commonplace in UAW dialogue around Aboriginal advancement. In a 1963 interview on the plight of Aboriginal women for *Our Women,* Veronica Ditford, identified as an Indigenous woman from NSW, stated: 'People reckon there is not a "Little Rock" here in Australia, but there is. It is not as big as in America, but it is here alright.'[162]

Like Street, the UAW placed importance on Australia's international reputation. The UAW vehemently protested the conviction and subsequent imprisonment of Indigenous artist Albert Namatjira in 1958. Part of the argument put forward by the UAW was that:

> ..shameful incidents such as this are an exposure of the grave injustices coloured Australians suffer under discriminatory laws, and which violate human dignity and rights and are harmful to our nation's prestige nationally and throughout the world.[163]

The UAW wrote letters of support to Namatjira and presented his paintings to the WIDF, with the intention of bringing international attention to the plight of Aboriginal Australians. While the UAW often advocated for the rights of specific groups within Australia, such as women strikers, its actions in drawing international attention to the issues faced by Australia's Indigenous population were unusual for the organisation. However, UAW members like Barbara Curthoys, Pearl Gibbs and Freda Brown were passionate anti-racism campaigners who contextualised racial oppression as a global issue.

The UAW recognised the potential hypocrisy in 'preaching peace abroad while tolerating racial discrimination at home'.[164] Further, linking Australia's shameful treatment of its own people to its international reputation was consistent with the strategy described above by Chesterman, designed to pressure the Federal government to act. The UAW's participation in this broader effort to effect

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[160] Resolutions Carried Unanimously at the Annual Meeting of the Union of Australian Women (NSW), 'Resolution for the Protection of our Aboriginal People', November 1951, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU; Fitzpatrick, 'Lesser Tribes without the Law', 407.
[161] 'Women from Cities, Coalfields, Country, Plan a Peace Programme', Second Annual Conference of the UAW (NSW), 1952, p. 2, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[162] 'It's a Hard Life for Aborigines', *Our Women,* September-December Issue, 1963, p. 28, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[163] Resolutions of UAW Annual Meeting (NSW), 18 October 1958, p. 1, 1.3 Meeting: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[164] Executive Report to Annual Meeting of the UAW (NSW), 18 October 1958, p. 2, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

change with domestically and internationally focused campaigning reveals that the UAW was engaged with the civil rights movement as a whole, not merely as a subsidiary of the Communist Party. In 1961 the UAW expressed dismay at the 'continued denial of citizen rights to the Indigenous people of Australia' and proposed a deadline of November 1962 to obtain those rights. This date was significant in that it marked the beginning of the Empire and Commonwealth Games held in Western Australia. The UAW felt that campaigning strenuously prior to this date would motivate the government to action, under the glare of an international spotlight.[165] Although advocacy for fellow Australians in their fight against racism was paramount within the UAW, the organisation was involved in numerous campaigns to end discrimination internationally.

The UAW claimed that it had 'consistently campaigned against injustice at home and abroad' and had frequently contributed to the release of prisoners and prevented deportation or even executions. It stated that these instances were 'too numerous to list'.[166] In 1964, the UAW urged its branches to send letters of protest against the 'extreme sentences' handed down to political prisoners during the Rivonia trials in South Africa. The Victorian Executive printed a letter sent to the South African Minister of Justice which read, in part: "We believe that the struggle of these men against apartheid laws is a struggle for freedom and for the right to live in human dignity and equality."[167] The letter further endorsed a 1963 UN resolution to release all political prisoners and abandon the trials, which passed 106 votes to one. True to its focus on the ways in which political issues affected women specifically, the UAW took special interest in Elizabeth Mafeking, an anti-apartheid activist in exile. The UAW raised funds for her benefit.[168] In 1966 the UAW sold buttons to raise funds to end apartheid, a task the UAW had routinely undertaken in collaboration with the AAL on behalf of Indigenous Australians since the 1950s.[169]

The UAW's opposition to systemic racism was bound to the closely linked issue of colonialism and support for democracy around the world. The CPA and the WIDF each promoted independence and self-determination for former colonies as central to the pursuit of world peace. The UAW declared in 1960:

[165] Minutes of UAW National Committee Meeting, 17-19 February 1961, p. 3, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[166] Report of the President to the Annual Conference of the UAW (NSW), 1953, p. 3, z326, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[167] UAW Newsletter (Vic), April 1964, p. 2, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[168] UAW Newsletter (Vic), May 1965, p. 3, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[169] Annual Report, UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1966, p. 6, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

> We will withstand all policies of governments, or of any interest that fosters ill-will and prejudice among people; we will seek by knowledge and understanding, to build friendship and fellowship with people of every nationality.[170]

In January 1961 the UAW released a press statement condemning the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, the first democratically elected Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and a leader of the broader African independence movement. The statement declared that the 'bestial violence' against Lumumba had global implications for peace and democracy and demanded that the UN direct the Belgian colonialists it viewed as responsible to withdraw from Congolese politics.[171] Although decades later it would be confirmed that Lumumba's assassination was facilitated by the CIA, the UAW does not appear to have been immediately aware of direct US involvement or it certainly would have taken the opportunity to condemn American Imperialism – particularly given Lumumba's friendly relationship with the Soviet Union and European Communist Parties.[172]

By April 1961, the UAW had included the DRC in its 'Stay out of other people's countries' deputation to the US embassy. The UAW linked the foreign domination of the Congo to the safety of Congolese women and children, the passive victims of political conflict and the maintenance of unwanted Colonial Governance.[173] The UAW National Committee initiated correspondence protesting the UN's failure to carry out the General Assembly's previous decision to expel the Belgians from the Congo and attempted to bring these events to the attention of the Australian public, directing a copy of the letter to the ABC News Service in February 1961.[174] Anti-colonialism became one of the UAW's most prominent campaigns of the 1960s. In the same year as the UAW protested events in the Congo, the Victorian UAW took aim at the French Consul for the 'repression' of Algerians and took a special interest in West Irian and Papua and New Guinea, petitioning the Menzies government to oppose colonial rule in Australia's closest neighbours.[175]

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[170] Resolutions from the Second National Conference of the UAW, 27 May-2 June 1960, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[171] UAW National Committee Circular to Members, 26 January 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[172] See for example: Leo Zeilig, *Lumumba: Africa's Lost Leader*, (London: Haus Publishing, 2008), 127-129; Madeleine G. Kalb, 'The C.I.A. and Lumumba', *The New York Times Magazine,* 2 August 1981, 32. However, an article in *Tribune* indicates that the CPA openly suspected US involvement, accusing the USA and the UN of collusion with the Belgians due to the 'mishandling' of civil unrest within the DRC. See 'Lumumba was Murdered by Imperialists', *Tribune,* 15 February 1961, 12.
[173] UAW National Committee Circular to Members, 26 January 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[174] Minutes of Meeting of UAW National Committee, 17-19 February 1961, p. 1, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[175] Correspondence from the Victorian Branch of the UAW to the National Executive, 30 March 1961, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

In addition to actively challenging systems of racial oppression, the UAW's promotion of racial harmony was a feature of its work to politicise women, in collaboration with the WIDF. Solidarity among women of different racial and cultural backgrounds was nurtured by contact through the WIDF. Literature promoting WIDF events routinely depicted imagery of women of different ethnicities working together on its publications – not mere propaganda, but an accurate representation of the experience of WIDF delegates.[176] Artwork promoting events like International Women's Day within *Our Women* followed suit, featuring images of culturally diverse women collaborating in harmony.[177]

In honour of IWD in 1964, the UAW reported on a pamphlet it had received with greetings from the National Federation of Indian Women, among others. The pamphlet was to promote Working Women's Day on 9 March and included the demands of Indian women: the provision of quality childcare facilities and the improvement of existing services, equal pay, price control and abolition of discrimination against married women. Upon relaying the contents of the brochure, the author of the article remarked: 'How like our own!'[178] Marvelling at similarities across racial and cultural barriers might appear parochial by modern standards, but during the time of the White Australia Policy (not fully dismantled until 1973), most Australians had limited experience of other cultures and had been exposed to the narrative of 'otherness' which defined 'non-anglicised' people.[179] In this way, the UAW's reporting of its contact with international women's organisations served to break down these misconceptions within the minds of its members. In 1955 the WIDF wrote: 'Let us do away with everything that divides us and cement the friendship of women of all countries.'[180]

Conclusion

The UAW's covert and overt affiliations to the CPA and WIDF respectively engendered participation in a worldwide community of socialist activists. The UAW was active in campaigns spanning peace, disarmament, antiracism, anti-imperialism and participated in numerous other specific and varied political campaigns on an international basis. The UAW was vocal on issues of Australian foreign policy and campaigned for the equal treatment of all Australians, particularly the Indigenous community, in its attempt to incorporate Australian women as citizens of the world. The UAW often cited internationally based statistics to demonstrate Australia's failings in areas like systemic racism, education, social services and women's rights. While these features paint a picture of a progressive,

[176] See for example: Booklet: *10th Anniversary of the Women's International Democratic Federation,* c. 1955, z326, Box 6, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[177] Image on Article Promoting the 1963 World Congress of Women, *Our Women,* September-December 1963, p. 17, 4.1.1 Our Women, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[178] UAW Newsletter (Vic Section), April 1964, p. 3, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[179] For further reading on this topic, see: Catherine Kevin, 'Histories of Constrained Compassion: The Idealised Refugee Family and the Australian Nation, 1947-1975', *The History of the Family,* 22/4 (2017), 425-431 at 430.
[180] NAA: A6122/16, 1174, 87, Extract from 'International Organisations' for file on UAW, WIDF Unity Campaign, 1 December 1955.

internationally active organisation, which connected Australian political issues with world politics, the UAW's communist-driven focus on international affairs was a sometime source of contention between the leadership and the rank and file membership.

More than half a century later, it is difficult to ascertain with any accuracy the impact of this dynamic on the UAW's ability to court new members and maintain the activity of its existing members. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that the UAW's pro-Soviet, anti-American political stance alienated the non-communist working-class women it courted. Further, the geographical isolation of Australia and the more mundane and pragmatic issues facing working class families gave rise to some resentment within the local groups over what they perceived as a disproportionate focus on international issues. Nevertheless, the UAW fostered interest in the peace movement and educated its members on the intricacies of foreign policy and international affairs while undertaking peace activities and local or domestic campaigns. The UAW's effective contribution to campaigns against American war comics and war toys is evidence of the organisation's ability to tap into a social issue conducive to the concerns of Australian women, while simultaneously linking issues of international political relevance.

The UAW's efforts to place Australian issues within a broader international context was central to its mission of including women in civic life and raising the political consciousness of working-class Australians at a pivotal time in Australia's political and cultural understanding of its place in the world. Although the organisation's political position was often jaundiced and inconsistent due to its uncritical adherence to a Stalinist worldview, the UAW's progressive ideas on the direction of Australian foreign policy, self-determination for colonial nations and the abolition of racial discrimination were advanced for the time, and propelled by a humanitarian outlook as much as by political ideology. By infusing its domestic activism with the principles of internationalism and positioning Australian campaigns as part of a global effort to create a better future for children in particular, the UAW demonstrated the importance of women's activism and characterisedits membership and potential members as progressive citizens of the world.

Chapter Five

Progressive Politics, Social Conservatism: The UAW in the Post-Menzies Era.

'Don't be too polite girls…'[1]

Introduction

This final chapter will examine the reaction of the UAW to the social and political upheaval of the late 1960s and the evolution of left-wing activism. This pivotal paradigm shift produced generational and philosophical hurdles for UAW members during their attempts to integrate into the rapidly changing landscape of peace and particularly women's rights activism in the post-Menzies era. UAW histories are united in the conclusion that the emergence of Second Wave Feminism overshadowed the UAW's less visible efforts to raise the status of women in Australia.[2] The UAW's reluctance to agitate around interpersonal, gendered issues like domestic and sexual violence, reproductive autonomy and sexual politics within the home and workplace marked an end to the UAW's already declining status as a politically radical and socially progressive organisation. The increasing trend towards civil disobedience and aggressive behaviour during public protests further alienated the UAW from its New Left counterparts.

This thesis has considered the UAW's activism in the context of the Menzies era (1950-1966), in which the UAW drew strength from its battle against anti-working-class policies and the conservative family values that were a smokescreen for gender discrimination in the workplace. In contrast, the latter half of the 1960s saw UAW membership and activity stagnate, while a plethora of emerging voices championed similar issues in new and varied ways, extending dialogue around gender equality and demanding action without consideration to social norms. There is no doubt that the UAW's 'golden age' was between the period 1950 and 1966; however, in a reduced capacity the UAW's relevance remained where it had always been: within the niche it had carved for itself amongst older, working class housewives and, to a lesser extent, blue-collar working women. This demographic was not typically receptive to mainstream feminism, which were perceived by many working-class women as lacking class consciousness and only advocating issues relevant to young, middle-class women. However, rather than embrace this role the UAW spent much of the late 1960s attempting to reach young, working class women with little success.

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[1] Joseph Toscano, 'Stalwart Community Fighter (Alma Moreton Obituary)', *The Age,* 5 January 2010.
[2] See for example: Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal,* 218; Zora Simic, 'Butter not Bombs', 07.2; Kevin O'Toole, 'The Union of Australian Women: The Childcare Issue', 144.

This chapter will first examine the changing demographics of the UAW in the socio-cultural context of the late 1960s. As the UAW's membership both aged and declined in numbers, the organisation rallied to entice younger women to its ranks but lacked the ability or apparent relevance to attract a younger, more impatient generation. With the proliferation of emerging women's organisations, and despite the UAW's insistence that it was a 'grassroots' movement, it was unable to tap into the passions of young women in the late 1960s. The chapter will examine the UAW's strategies for recruiting young women in this period and how these efforts aligned the once 'avant-garde' organisation to mainstream ideas in a population that was largely indifferent to its presence. This section will highlight the juxtaposition of political progressivism and social conservatism inherent within the UAW's rhetoric during the late 1960s.

Second, the chapter will address the impact of Australian politics on the UAW, most significantly the end of Robert Menzies' tenure as Prime Minister and shifting loyalties within the Australian Communist Party. Despite its conservative status, the Holt and succeeding Liberal Party governments operated during a time of rapid social change and therefore oversaw legislation which would have been considered progressive under Menzies. However, the chapter will argue that in spite of this progressive shift, the UAW often failed to build on successes due to finite resources and inexperience in achieving its goals. A discussion of the UAW's contribution to the 1966 Federal election campaign will illuminate the UAW's complicated relationship to New Left activists within the peace and anti-conscription movements. While gradual change within federal politics required a slight adjustment in the UAW's engagement strategies, the looming 'split' between traditionalists and reformists within the Communist Party culminated in Freda Brown distancing the UAW from the Party in the early 1970s. At the core of the UAW's disillusionment with the new direction taken by the CPA was the willingness of the Party to affirm the Women's Liberation Movement and embrace the ideas of the New Left.[3] While some members of the UAW welcomed the revitalisation of the women's movement, the proverbial 'old guard' collaborated begrudgingly and with frequent conflict in campaigns joined by women's organisations of the New Left.[4]

The third section of this chapter will discuss the UAW's overarching interaction with the various groups comprising feminism's 'second wave'.[5] It will incorporate an analysis of the UAW's approach

[3] Lisa Milner, *Swimming Against the Tide,* 139.
[4] See for example: Fabian and Loh, *Left-wing Ladies,* 100; Milner, *Swimming Against the Tide,* 140.
[5] Second Wave Feminism refers to the radical women's rights movement of the late 1960s and 1970s, distinct from the 'first wave' of feminism which is associated with the Suffragette movement of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. Second Wave Feminists demanded equality in all spheres of life, including within interpersonal relationships. A defining characteristic of Second Wave Feminism, distinct from its forebearers, was the practice of 'consciousness raising', a practice in which women shared gendered experiences and explored the depth of oppression they experienced in day-to-day life. Reger has argued that the 'wave' metaphor was chosen by Second Wave Feminists to claim a historic legacy and denote continuity in the struggle for women's liberation. Betty Friedan's 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique* is often cited as a starting point of the 'second wave' in America. Second Wave Feminism produced the Women's Liberation Movement which grew out of the New

to addressing the new rhetorical focus on interpersonal gender relations and the chaotic, unstructured nature of the burgeoning women's movement. The UAW's drive to recruit 'young' members will be examined in the context of the rising participation of young activists in the pursuit of women's rights. This discussion will then be narrowed to explore the different relationships with New Left women's activists demonstrated by local and state branches of the UAW, with some collaborative efforts resulting in mutual respect and productive working relationships and others in different locations remaining tense and combative. Within this section, the individual experiences of UAW members with the emergence of Second Wave Feminism will add a deeper insight into the process by which the UAW attempted to integrate into this new iteration of the women's movement and the challenges and successes it faced in doing so.

The final section of the chapter will discuss the ways in which the UAW adapted to the conditions of Australian society in the post-Menzies era. Despite the myriad philosophical and logistical challenges the UAW faced during this period, the organisation persevered through what Simic has described as a 'marginal space' between Australian McCarthyism and the rise of Second Wave Feminism.[6] The UAW conducted activities in the late 1960s around issues for which it is remembered as an effective contributor, including Indigenous inclusion, equal pay, peace and childcare. This section will demonstrate that although the UAW lost its vitality within the women's movement due to its unwillingness to compromise its Old Left world view, the perspective and experience of its members continued to add value to the campaigns in which it participated. The UAW maintained its connections with many activists within the peace, labour and women's movement, with older working-class women and with Indigenous women. It thus continued, albeit in a reduced capacity, to politicise and advocate for marginalised Australian women alongside its New Left counterparts.

Changing demographics and dwindling membership in the mid-late 1960s

Chapter Two presented analysis that characterised typical UAW members as married housewives and mothers, overwhelmingly working class and numbering an inexact 1900 in 1961.[7] Although the UAW did not keep an official membership roll on a national level, Freda Brown's biographer, Lisa Milner, has stated that by 1957 the UAW was an 'energetic and growing organisation with a national

Left, peace and civil rights movements in the USA, emerging in Australia through comparable channels and aided by publications from America in 1969. See Elizabeth Wilson, 'Feminism Today', *Hecate,* 30/1 (2004), 212-221; Jo Reger, 'Finding a Place in History: A Discursive Legacy of the Wave Metaphor and Contemporary Feminism', *Feminist Studies,* 43/1 (2017), 193-221 at 201; Evan Smith, 'When the Personal Became too Political: ASIO and the Monitoring of the Women's Liberation Movement', *Australian Feminist Studies,* 33/95, (2018), 45-60 at 48.

[6] Zora Simic, 'Butter not Bombs', 07.2.

[7] Executive Report for National Committee Meeting, 17 February 1961, p. 5, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

membership of six thousand'.[8] This figure almost certainly represents the pinnacle of UAW membership – likely brought about by the creation of the national body the year prior – with a sharp drop in numbers by 1961. A brief article in the *Canberra Times* reported the UAW's national membership at 2000 in 1967, suggesting that following the period of growth after becoming national and the subsequent decline, membership within the UAW plateaued.[9]

From the scant records pertaining to membership demographics, the age range for UAW members was varied by location in the 1950s and early 1960s, while the latter half of the 1960s saw a decline in younger members within the organisation. Zelda D'Aprano characterised the UAW of the early 1970s as 'middle-aged'.[10] Most prominent members with publicly available biographical details were, by the late 1960s, in their mid-forties to their early seventies (with some exceptions like Audrey McDonald, who was thirty in 1967).[11] Alma Morton has recalled that the Malvern branch of the early 1950s was mostly populated by 'older' women, while Victorian member Nell Johns has claimed that the UAW 'never had a young membership'.[12] Conversely, fellow Victorians Betty Oke and Yvonne Smith have recalled their own branches – Rosanna and Sunshine respectively – as populated with young mothers in the early and mid-1950s.[13] Smith has further elaborated on the topic, telling Fabian and Loh that women joined 'relatively young' and stayed until middle-age.[14] This issue became particularly relevant to the UAW in the latter half of the 1960s, when its ageing membership corresponded to a decline in the participation of formerly active members in UAW activities.

Another Victorian member, Betty Olle, has stated that the UAW was 'really radical in the early days' but became less so as its members aged.[15] This perspective is shared by Alma Morton, who expressed the view that women in the UAW became 'too comfortable' in the 1960s to fight for the living conditions of struggling women – implying that the financial struggles of securing stable housing and raising a young family were behind many members by this time.[16] This view had been previously expressed within documentation produced by the Victorian UAW.[17] Taken together, the statements

[8] Lisa Milner, 'A Key Person Internationally: Towards a Biography of Freda Brown', *Lilith: A Feminist History Journal,* 22, (2016), 21-36 at 31.
[9] 'Women's Protest in Sydney', *The Canberra Times,* 6 May 1967, 5.
[10] Fabian and Loh, *Left-Wing Ladies,* 99.
[11] See for example: Zelda D'Aprano, *Kath Williams,* 1; Milner, *Swimming Against the Tide,* 17; McDonald and McDonald, *Intimate Union*, 17; 'Union of Australian Women (1950-)', The Australian Women's Register [website], The Australian Women's Archive Programme, 26 February 2019, viewed 20 November 2020.
[12] Alma Morton interview with Suzanne Fabian, 5 August 1994; Nell Johns interview with Jodi Ellis, 16 July 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[13] Betty Oke interview with Jodi Ellis, 12 February 1985; Yvonne Smith interview with Jodi Ellis, 29 September 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[14] Fabian and Loh, *Left-Wing Ladies,* 29.
[15] Betty Olle interview with Jodi Ellis, 15 March 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[16] Alma Morton interview with Jodi Ellis, 26 February 1985, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[17] *Victorian Section, Union of Australian Women, 1950-1970*, c. early 1970s, p. 5, 6.2.1 Vic Section UAW 1950-1970, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

and recollections of UAW members suggest that by the mid-1960s the UAW was populated by long term members whose individual motivations and energy levels had evolved with their life circumstances.

The reduction of active and new members within the UAW was an ongoing issue which plagued the organisation during the second half of the 1960s. The UAW began to address these issues persistently in 1966. The theme of the 1966 National Conference was the urgency for organisational growth and the revitalisation of its membership, with calls to action repeated in the Annual Reports of state branches.[18] The UAW National Executive proposed the need 'to develop forms of activity that appeal to younger women' in response to what it referred to as 'changes within the organisation'.[19] The UAW acknowledged that its self-described 'dreary meetings' held in 'drab surroundings' required revitalisation in order to impress potential new members.[20] It suggested that *Our Women* should include content appealing to young women in order to attract them to the UAW.[21] The UAW further stressed the need to make its functions more entertaining to retain the attention of younger members. In 1967 the NSW Executive Committee reported that its advocacy of affordable housing was drawing interest from younger women, adding that perhaps a renewed focus on child endowment would similarly interest this demographic. The NSW leadership further commented that it was encouraging that young women were not exclusively drawn by the promise of social events, betraying an intergenerational scepticism towards the authenticity and commitment of young activists.[22]

Although membership issues affected the UAW nationwide, the Queensland UAW was perhaps the most active in its attempts to involve younger women in its activities. In 1968, the Queensland State Secretary Alice Hughes wrote to the National branch to suggest 'a very young lass' named Pauline Anderson be mentored within the organisation in order to take on more responsibility. Hughes described Anderson as a 'young force in the future of the women's movement'.[23] The Queensland branch further encouraged its younger members to pitch ideas and praised their efforts when they did so. Later in 1968, Queensland UAW member Eva Bacon reported:

[18] See for example: Annual Report, UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1966, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[19] Draft proposal for National Conference, 19 May 1966, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[20] UAW Newsletter (Vic), November 1969, p. 5, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[21] Correspondence from Queensland Branch to National Branch, 29 August 1968, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[22] Minutes of Administrative Meeting of the UAW (NSW), 24 April 1967, p. 1, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[23] Correspondence from Queensland Branch to National Branch, 6 June 1968, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.

> The young people at the last meeting recommended that we conduct a survey on women's rights; an excellent idea which, if carried out properly, would be an invaluable lead-up to the seminar. We are certain to take up this idea in the new year.[24]

While the Queensland, Victorian and NSW state branches and the national body of the UAW routinely discussed the problem of attracting and retaining a young membership, the West Australian, South Australian and Tasmanian branches discussed 'building the UAW', establishing special working women's groups and increasing membership without specific reference to youth.[25] The small membership numbers in these state branches likely made the need for new members of all ages outweigh demographic concerns.

In its attempts to recruit and engage with young women, the UAW's focus remained on housewives with young children at home, declaring in 1969:

> We must concentrate on the grass-roots level, and increase our membership, our groups and above all our young membership. To this end we have decided to pay a baby-sitter at our functions, so that young members can participate, knowing that their children are cared for.[26]

References to a 'young membership' within the UAW were almost exclusively tied to the age of children under a woman's care. This metric for 'youth' was consistent with the UAW's focus on women as mothers and wives, a pervasive and accepted attitude of the Menzies era. Whether the women of the UAW sought 'young mothers' in whom they saw reflected their own early struggles or because they viewed this cohort was susceptible to recruitment, marriage and motherhood had long been a defining characteristic of the average UAW member. As membership plateaued in the 1960s and the UAW scrambled to recruit a new generation of young housewives, its attempts to attract a broad cross section of women from industry and elsewhere stalled. The financial and logistical impacts of a shrinking or otherwise inactive membership on the UAW was likely a factor in the organisation's decision to direct its energy towards recruiting women who fit its traditional 'status quo' – that is women whose primary role was that of housewife and mother, whether working outside the home or not. UAW policies would reflect this focus on young mothers in the mid-late 1960s.

[24] Report of the International Women's Day Committee (Qld), 22 November 1968, z236, Box 1, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[25] See for example: UAW News Sheet (SA), February 1969, p. 2, z236, Box 3, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU; UAW Annual Report (Tas), 1967, p. 6, z236, Box 4, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU; UAW Newsletter (WA), October 1968, p. 3, z236, Box 3, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[26] UAW Newsletter (Vic), November 1969, p. 5, 4.2.1, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

'Young marrieds' and working mothers: a pragmatic approach

In 1966 the UAW expounded on its commitment to strengthen the Australian family by ensuring the economic and social welfare of a demographic it dubbed 'young marrieds'.

> As a women's organisation, we are naturally concerned with the future of young people and their rights to be able to marry, to obtain a home, and have their families, secure in the knowledge that they are able to provide the best opportunities for their children.'[27]

The UAW's 'programme for young marrieds' was promoted heavily in the mid-late 1960s after making a positive impression on UAW members during its introduction at the 1966 National Conference.[28] The programme's introduction in 1966 coincided with the UAW's renewed focus on attracting a young membership. It pushed for the regulation of the cost of housing and land, specifically so that young couples would not delay having children after marriage. Further to this goal, the programme argued for the reasonable cost of healthcare for expectant mothers and safeguards to allow young women to return to work after the 'initial stages of child rearing'.[29] As in the UAW's 'mother and child' campaign, discussed in the previous chapter, the UAW called for an increase to maternity allowance and child endowment payments.

The UAW National Executive designed the programme as a tool to 'build the UAW', hoping to entice young working-class women to its ranks 'in the areas' (a frequently used phrase to denote working-class suburban locations with existing branches or the potential for new branches) and garner popular support from outside the organisation.[30] The programme did attract a degree of outside interest. The *Canberra Times* printed an article detailing the aims of the programme following its announcement at the UAW's Fourth National Conference.[31] In 1967, the NSW Executive Committee reported that the UAW's 'young marrieds' programme was indeed beginning to draw in young women.[32] Although there are no exact figures to assess the extent to which the programme was an effective recruitment tool, the campaign spanned several years. Six years after the 'programme for young marrieds' was introduced by the UAW, Audrey McDonald promoted it under the banner of 'action to involve young

[27] Correspondence from UAW (NSW) to the Presbyterian Welfare of Youth Department, 15 July 1966, z236, Box 1, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[28] Annual Report, UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1966, p. 4, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[29] Press statement from the UAW (NSW), 'Can we afford marmalade this week?', May 1967, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[30] 'Some ideas on Programme for Young Marrieds – discussed at National Executive', [document], 3 December 1966, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[31] 'Women's Plans for Young', *Canberra Times,* 2 June 1966, 16.
[32] Minutes of Management Committee Meeting of the UAW (NSW), 29 April 1967, p. 1, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.

women' to the 1972 WIDF Council Meeting in Budapest.[33] McDonald contextualised the programme as a way to 'take up the needs of young people in finding a home and starting a family'.

The UAW's emphasis on the importance of the family, combined with the popularity of the 'war toys' and 'television standards' campaigns of the same period, discussed in Chapter Four, pivoted the organisation further away from its Communist Party mandate of forming a core group of women in industry.[34] Although the UAW steadfastly supported women's participation in the workforce into the late 1960s, the popularity of campaigns centred around domestic and family issues within the rank and file membership appears to have resulted in women's industrial needs receiving less widespread attention, with the possible exception of childcare. The organisation certainly endorsed a system which eased women's entry and re-entry into the workforce after having children, as demonstrated by the stipulation in its young marrieds programme for workplace 'safeguards' for new mothers. Increasingly, the issues relevant to women in the workplace and working-class housewives were inextricably linked as employment opportunities opened up for married women. In 1967, the UAW delegate to the Business and Professional Women's Seminar, Jean Emerson, reported on projections that married women would be the largest percentage of women entering the workforce in subsequent years.[35]

The UAW worked on the basis that young working women prioritised their role as wives and mothers first and wage earners second.[36] In 1969 it reflected: 'Many working women are far more interested in their homes, their husband's problems and of course, quite naturally, their children, and give little time to the problems such as equal pay.'[37] This perspective was based upon the UAW's experience in attempting to engage this demographic and was supported by evidence gathered by the organisation. For example, a 1969 survey conducted by the UAW found that young working women saw their most pressing concerns as the availability of part-time work and childcare, rather than equal pay or opportunity for advancement.[38] Outside sources similarly conveyed the idea that as a group, young working women did not actively pursue their rights or demand opportunities for employment. As discussed in Chapter Three, in spite of its unrequited efforts to motivate individual women to build a grass-roots campaign for equal pay, the UAW ultimately took action on their behalf through the Arbitration Court in the late 1960s.

In a reply to the UAW's inquiry regarding employment opportunities for young women in regional centres, the Minister for Labour and National Service remarked that 'widening the scope of

[33] McDonald and McDonald, *Intimate Union*, 158.
[34] NAA: A6122/16, 1174, report, 'C. P. of A. Women's Cadres' Meeting', 19 June 1956, p. 1.
[35] Minutes of Management Committee Meeting of the UAW (NSW), 11 November 1967, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[36] UAW Newsletter (Vic), November 1969, p. 6, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[37] UAW Newsletter (Vic), November 1969, p. 6, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[38] UAW Newsletter (Vic), November 1969, p. 6, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

employment opportunities for women and girls is at least as dependent on changing the attitudes of employers, unions and WOMEN themselves, as it is on de-centralisation of industry'.[39] Although the UAW leadership argued for women's politicisation within industry, it also realised the importance of listening to the concerns most pressing to young women workers. In 1968 the UAW National Committee launched a campaign to highlight the special needs of working mothers.[40] The Victorian branch of the UAW proposed that the UAW collaborate with trade unions to ensure the availability of part-time work and childcare.[41] The issue of part-time work was only addressed decades later.[42] However, childcare became one of the UAW's most enduring legacies, according to O'Toole, and would court controversy within the organisation itself.[43]

Gender politics and family values

Throughout the breadth of its campaigns in the post-Menzies era, the UAW displayed both its maternalist and socialist roots. Characteristically, the UAW incorporated a passion for social justice throughout its campaigns as well as a commitment to economic equality for vulnerable Australian communities. For example, the UAW continued to press for higher wages and condemned the rising cost of living.[44] Although the late 1960s saw the connections between the UAW and trade union vary by state, the organisation was always willing to show solidarity with the union movement when the opportunity arose.[45] When the union movement rallied against attacks on the right to strike, the UAW joined the efforts to repeal the 'unjust clauses' (powers to fine striking workers) from the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act, which resulted in the Arbitration Commission discontinuing the use of fines.[46] The UAW's focus on social services, prices and consumer issues addressed the plight of economically struggling families, pensioners and war widows. Although the UAW was not always financially secure, it donated time and resources to people affected by poverty or disaster.[47] In 1969 the UAW sought the collection of 200,000 signatures on a petition to fight poverty and social injustice.[48] It maintained focus on the economic and social inequality of Indigenous

[39] UAW Newsletter (Vic), March 1968, p. 6, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[40] 'Conference shows scope of UAW activities', *Tribune,* 23 October 1968, 4.
[41] UAW Newsletter (Vic), November 1969, p. 6, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[42] Fabian and Loh, *Left-wing Ladies,* 101.
[43] O'Toole, 'The Union of Australian Women: The Childcare Issue', 152.
[44] UAW Newsletter (Vic), August 1969, p. 1, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[45] For example, the Tasmanian UAW characterised its support from trade unions as weak, while the UAW's NSW minute meetings show collaborative efforts with various unions. See for example: UAW Annual Report (Tas), 1967, p. 6, z236, Box 4, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU; Administrative Meeting of the UAW (NSW), 22 January 1968, p. 1, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[46] UAW Newsletter (Vic), June 1969, p. 1, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[47] UAW Newsletter (Vic), Jan-Feb 1967, p. 2, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[48] Executive Meeting of the UAW (Vic), 5 November 1969, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

Australians and continued to support efforts to aid Indigenous organisations and their communities in the late 1960s.[49]

Concurrently, the UAW took a moral stance on issues of family and child rearing. The phrase 'as a women's organisation' was used within literature discussing issues relevant to children and young people.[50] The organisation championed children's moral welfare, education, amenities and safety in the home with the implicit licence of universal motherhood. The UAW positively regarded the idea that both parents should have joint responsibilities with regards to children, but the language it used and the emphasis it placed on women's nurturing role in society is suggestive of a comparative equality. In a 1968 report on working women the UAW mused, 'The dilemma and guilt complex come into it, who is going to look after the children and take the responsibility while mother is away?'[51] The procurement of childcare for the children of working parents was, according to the UAW, the responsibility of the mother and the State but not the father. The UAW called for women's economic emancipation through the right to work and access to services but overlooked the social and cultural elements subordinating women within marriage. Although the UAW supported the reform of women's role within the family, it saw the institution itself as sacrosanct.

In 1968 the UAW heaped praise on the WIDF's report on women in the family, which declared: 'The family is the fundamental unit of society. It must be founded on marriage, relations between husband and wife, on mutual trust, love and respect among all its members'.[52] As the wider women's movement was on the verge of embracing controversial challenges to gender norms and the nuclear family model, the UAW increasingly affirmed mainstream societal notions of womanhood as synonymous with motherhood and the responsibility for the physical and moral welfare of children. The heteronormative basis of the family was unquestioned within the UAW. As one member later commented, different sexualities were not (openly) considered by UAW members until the emergence of the Women's Liberation Movement.[53] The UAW's commitment to both the nuclear family and married women's right to work naturally led the organisation to the issue of childcare and its accessibility to working class mothers.

The UAW included the demand for affordable and accessible childcare within several of its larger campaigns, such as its 'programme for young marrieds' and the extended social services campaign ('mother and child') which also included calls to increase maternity allowance and the old age

[49] See for example: UAW News Sheet (SA), November 1966, p. 6, z236, Box 3, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU; UAW News Sheet (NSW), September 1968, p. 8, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[50] See for example: Correspondence from UAW (NSW) to the Presbyterian Welfare of Youth Department, 15 July 1966, z236, Box 1,UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[51] UAW Newsletter (WA), August 1968, p. 2, z236, Box 3, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[52] UAW Newsletter (WA), May 1969, p. 3, z236, Box 3, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[53] Eileen Capocchi interview with Jodi Ellis, 2 October 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

pension.[54] Alma Morton – the Victorian UAW's spokesperson on childcare and a fervent activist on the issue – has recalled that even within the UAW National Committee, some members were reticent to push for childcare for fear of creating controversy, urging instead an emphasis on government funded kindergarten programmes.[55] The idea that kindergarten was for the benefit of the child's education – unlike childcare, which centred the mother's need to work – was more palatable to those who believed a woman's primary function was to raise her children. This push and pull between 'family values' and 'women's citizenship' within the UAW foreshadowed its complex relationship to the women's movement of the following decade, though ultimately the UAW proceeded with the campaign.[56] In August 1969, the Victorian newsletter called for a 'big hand for Alma Morton', who had pled the case for government subsidised childcare during a televised interview.[57]

The success of the UAW's childcare campaign nationwide was a keystone achievement of the UAW in progressing the status of women in Australia. O'Toole writes that the UAW's influence within the development of community childcare was significant from the late 1960s.[58] However, internal concerns over the public reception of childcare advocacy were indicative of some members' increasingly static worldview. Despite the UAW championing the needs of working mothers, the idea that the UAW would radicalise working class women on a large scale to help build a future socialist state was, by the late 1960s, a distant memory. Of her former women comrades in the Communist Party, many of whom were UAW members, women's liberationist Zelda D'Aprano wrote: 'The more I thought about the women in the [Communist] Party, the more they resembled a nice group of Christian ladies'.[59] D'Aprano later commented that UAW members displayed the 'controlled, ladylike behaviour common to conservative women'.[60]

The UAW's attachment to gender roles as manifested within the nuclear family was not a new facet of the organisation, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, but became more pronounced with the changing social mores of the era. During the early 1950s, membership to the UAW was inherently radical due to its identification with communism and its public demonstrations. As the concept of equality between the sexes became a more widely accepted aspiration in the post Menzies era, the UAW's ideological foundations remained rooted in a Stalinist worldview – one which emphasised the need for communists to remain as moral, upstanding citizens in order to set the standard for a future

[54] UAW Newsletter (Vic), November 1969, p. 2, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[55] UAW Newsletter (Vic), December 1969, p. 2, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections; Alma Morton interview with Jodie Ellis, 27 November 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[56] See for example: UAW Newsletter (Vic), December 1968, p. 5, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[57] UAW Newsletter (Vic), August 1969, p. 5, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[58] O'Toole, 'The Union of Australian Women: The Childcare Issue', 152.
[59] D'Aprano, *Zelda,* 136.
[60] Fabian and Loh, *Left Wing Ladies,* 100.

socialist utopia.[61] In a 1984 interview, UAW members confirmed that the CPA expected them to be 'good little housewives' and to remain socially conservative in order to fight the ever-present spectre of anticommunism.[62] However, during the anti-communist Menzies era, exhibiting family values was insufficient to absolve a communist of their political affiliation in the eyes of society. Thus, the largely law abiding, community minded married housewives of the UAW were perceived as radical activists for their political opinions and their willingness to publicly voice them.

Although the Cold War would continue for another two decades, association with the Communist Party towards the end of the 1960s did not carry the same stigma as it did in the 1950s. Furthermore, the idea of women participating in public debate and receiving equal rights was gradually – if not always enthusiastically – accepted as inevitable within mainstream society. In 1967, the conservative women's magazine, *Australian Women's Weekly*, published a positively framed article on UAW member Vilma Ward's 'women's grievance day.'[63] The popular magazine was notoriously traditional in its representation of gender, with typical content ranging from advice on etiquette and rating one's 'likability' to featured bible passages.[64] In 1968, it asked: 'Women! Do you honestly want equality?'[65] However, by 1970 the *Australian Women's Weekly* was publishing supportive articles on gender equality, with titles like 'Wanted: Women to become engineers.'[66] While the UAW remained a progressive organisation with left-wing political motivations at the core of its policies, the social values and image it displayed increasingly reflected the values and lifestyle representative of mainstream – even conservative – society. With hindsight, the perception of the UAW as less radical in the mid-late 1960s than it was the previous decade resulted as much from social change as from an ageing and less active membership.

The UAW's adjustment to Holt's Australia

The de-escalation of radicalism within the UAW coincided with the succession of Harold Holt as Prime Minister of the Liberal-Country Party government when Menzies resigned in January 1966. The Roman philosopher Seneca posited that 'excellence withers without an adversary', a sentiment relevant to the UAW's loss of its most frequent target for criticism, Menzies. In late 1966 Freda Brown conceded that the UAW must revise its approach to engaging publicly

[61] For further insights on this perspective see: Zelda D'Aprano, *Zelda. The Becoming of a Woman,* (North Carlton: Visa, 1978)*;* Amirah Inglis, *The Hammer, the Sickle and the Washing up: Memories of an Australian Woman Communist,* (South Melbourne: Hyland House, 1995).
[62] UAW Meeting with Suzanne Fabian and Morag Loh, 20 February 1995, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[63] 'Grievance Meeting – for Women Only', *Australian Women's Weekly,* 3 May 1967, 2.
[64] Betty Keep, 'Good Manners', *Australian Women's Weekly,* 27 May 1970, 43; 'Likability Score', *The Australian Women's Weekly,* 11 June 1969, 37; 'From the Bible', *The Australian Women's Weekly,* 12 May 1971, 92.
[65] Joan Flanagan, 'Women! Do you honestly want equality?', *Australian Women's Weekly,* 20 November 1968, 65.
[66] 'Wanted: Women to Become Engineers', *Australian Women's Weekly,* 2 December 1970, 58.

with its political adversaries, after Holt's unanticipated acceptance of questions from the public during an appearance in Randwick. The UAW leadership reflected on its members' tendency to 'shout over' the Prime Minister during public events, because they were habituated to Menzies' refusal to engage with UAW members and other activists on the left.[67] Menzies' sixteen-year tenure as Prime Minister had provided the UAW with a consistent enemy, a figurehead of the Australian anti-communist movement and architect of economic policies anathema to its socialist ideology. The political dynamic between the Menzies government and organisations on the left was indeed contentious, but also had the effect of galvanising Menzies' detractors in their efforts to expose the ill effects of his policies on the working class, minority groups and Menzies' political critics.

The Menzies era has often been remembered for its repression of left-wing ideas and dearth of social progress.[68] However, as has been pointed out by historian Marilyn Lake, in addition to former UAW members like Freda Brown and Margaret Arrowsmith, the UAW's part in the struggle for women's rights, peace and racial equality elevated these issues and paved the way for future generations to progress them when the political milieu was more favourable.[69] The UAW, the CPA and their progressive contemporaries of the Menzies era persisted in the thankless task of challenging the notions that poverty, white supremacy and sexual inequality were acceptable within Australian society.

Although Prime Minister Holt and his successors differed little, ideologically, from Menzies, the general tone of political discourse in the latter half of the 1960s had shifted away from virulent anticommunism and anti-progressivism. Further, by the UAW's own assessment, Holt's leadership style was less adversarial towards those who questioned Liberal Party policies.[70] Between 1966 and 1970 the successive Liberal-Country Party governments of Holt, McEwen and Gorton presided over events including the appointment of Senator Annabelle Rankin to the Department of Housing – the first woman to administer a Federal government department – the lifting of the marriage ban in the public service, incremental progress on equal pay, the granting of Aboriginal citizenship and the

[67] Minutes of Executive Meeting of the UAW (NSW), 5 December 1966, p. 1, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[68] This point is made more specifically in the case of progress on women's equality and equal pay by Sheridan and Stretton: Tom Sheridan and Pat Stretton, 'Pragmatic Procrastination: Governments, Unions and Equal Pay, 1949-68', *Labour History,* no. 94 (May 2008): 133-156 at 133.
[69] Lake, *Getting Equal,* 212; O'Toole, 'The childcare issue', 144-154; Freda Brown interview with Suzanne Fabian, 17 February 1995; Meg Arrowsmith interview with Jodi Ellis, 16 October 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[70] Minutes of Executive Meeting of the UAW (NSW branch), 5 December 1966, p. 1, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.

easing of the white Australia policy.[71] These changes represented progress – under a conservative government – on many of the UAW's long stated goals.

The UAW was not always prepared for a political environment in which its demands were being met. Alma Morton felt that the organisation did not follow through on successful campaigns in the 1960s.[72] Of course, the tendency of the UAW to 'rest on its laurels' when a campaign gained momentum was primarily indicative of its modest resources. The UAW often collaborated with larger organisations or trade unions, making it prudent to step back as a campaign grew and required more time, energy and resources than the UAW could provide. In 1968, NSW State President Ella Schroder remarked that the UAW was habitually 'inclined to take on more than we can carry through'.[73] The UAW alternately framed this tendency as a deliberate strategy to initiate a given protest movement 'at the grass-roots level'.[74] However, until 1966 the entirety of UAW activities had been undertaken in a cultural and political environment influenced by the long governance of Robert Menzies. During this time there were very few victories for UAW members to celebrate, making it conceivable that the UAW's tendency to focus on beginning campaigns without 'following them through', was in small part because it had little experience in doing so. Despite the myriad challenges it faced as an organisation during the latter period, the UAW's struggle for peace in Vietnam and against conscription intensified as Holt committed to go 'all the way with LBJ' upon his electoral victory in 1966.[75]

The 1966 Federal election and the anti-conscription campaign

The ALP's loss of the 1966 Federal election has been identified as a pivotal event in the emergence of the New Left.[76] This election is generally regarded as a plebiscite on conscription and Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. Through this lens, the ALP's loss on an anti-conscription policy platform was a clear indication of the public's approval for Holt's policy of conscripting men for active service overseas, via the amended *National Service Act* 1965. Prior to the 1966 Federal election, opposition to conscription was framed by campaigners as a patriotic position, reminiscent of the successful and popular anti-conscription movement of the Great War. Irving has argued that following the ALP's electoral defeat, anti-conscription campaigners discarded the wholesome image

[71] Harold Holt: During Office, National Archives of Australia [website], <Harold Holt: during office | naa.gov.au>; Australian Prime Ministers. Harold Holt, The Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House [website], <Harold Holt — Prime Ministers — Australian Prime Ministers (moadoph.gov.au)>.
[72] Alma Moreton interview with Jodi Ellis, 5 August 1994, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[73] UAW Newsletter (Vic), May 1968, p. 5, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[74] UAW Newsletter (Vic), November 1969, p. 5, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[75] Report to UAW Annual Meeting, Annual Report (Tas), 11 November 1967, p. 1, z236, Box 4, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[76] Nick Irving, 'Anti-conscription protest, liberal individualism and the limits of national myths in the 1960s', *History Australia,* 14/2 (2017).

of patriotic nostalgia in favour of civil disobedience and public demonstrations.[77] The frustration and increasing indignation of anti-conscriptionists at the Australian public's indifference to the plight of young men sent to war became a major factor in the rise of public protest in Australia. As journalists began to report on the reality of war in Vietnam, the public's approval for the Liberal government's war policy waned, resulting in the gradual decrease in Australian military commitment and culminating in Gough Whitlam's electoral victory and subsequent abolishment of the *National Service* scheme in 1972. Throughout this upheaval, the UAW's peace activities remained consistent, despite some reservations about the radical tactics employed by student activists following the ALP's defeat in 1966.

The UAW had been heavily involved in the anti-conscription campaign leading up to the 1966 election period, in collaboration with the CPA and broader peace movement. In its annual report the UAW identified 'the struggle for peace and Australia's involvement in the dangerous war in Vietnam' as a primary factor driving UAW policy in the 1966-67 period.[78] The organisation reported its work with organisations active in 'protesting against one or all aspects of the war situation'.[79] 'Campaigns for peace in Vietnam and against conscription were connected, even if they were somewhat separate issues. The rhetorical focus of the ALP and its supporters during the 1966 election campaign was largely on the issue of conscription, with less emphasis placed on the withdrawal of Australian troops from Vietnam. In his election speech of 10 November 1966, Opposition leader Arthur Calwell stated:

> The most important issue in this campaign is Conscription, the conscription of a section of our twenty year old youths, against their wishes and their wills, to kill or be killed in the undeclared, civil war in Vietnam and the threatened extension of conscription to all twenty year olds and other age groups to increase our unwarranted and unnecessary commitment.[80]

While Calwell's speech confirmed Labor's opposition to Australian involvement in the Vietnam War, it was to the mothers, fathers and siblings of potential conscripts that he directed his campaign.

In its usual efforts to remain 'non-party political', the UAW positioned itself against Liberal Party policy, as opposed to explicitly supporting the ALP during the 1966 election campaign – a position reminiscent of the UAW's stance during the 1961 Federal election campaign, discussed in Chapter

[77] Nick Irving, 'Anti-conscription protest, liberal individualism and the limits of national myths in the 1960s', *History Australia,* 14/2 (2017), 187-201 at 188.
[78] Annual Report, UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1966, p. 3, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[79] Annual Report, UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1966, p. 3, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[80] Australian Federal Election Speeches, 'Arthur Calwell Australian Labor Party', 10 November 1966, *Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House,* electionspeeches moadoph.gov.au/speeches/1966-arthur-calwell.

Two.[81] The UAW instead urged its members to vote for a candidate whose policies were most closely aligned with those of the UAW. However, the ALP's commitment to opposing conscription correlates to the intensity and character of the UAW's anti-conscription activity throughout 1966. In February, the UAW sent sixteen members on a deputation to Canberra opposing conscription, organised by the Association for International Co-operation and Disarmament (AICD).[82] Local branches engaged the public in discussion on conscription, with a member from Sutherland in NSW approaching two hundred people to take an opinion poll in May.[83] In September, the UAW collaborated with Save Our Sons (SOS) and the AICD, handing out leaflets and canvassing petitions to present to parliament.[84] The UAW embraced the narrative of nostalgic patriotism prescribed by anti-conscription activists during the ALP's election campaign. In October 1966, the UAW announced that a celebration would be held by the 'Anti-conscription Jubilee Committee' in honour of the victory against conscription in 1916 and 1917. [85] The event was to be attended by the Opposition leader, Arthur Calwell. The importance of the anti-conscription movement to the ALP's election campaign is highlighted by the Opposition leader's attendance at this event only weeks away from the Federal election.

Following the ALP's loss of the Federal election, the UAW expressed disappointment but also hope of ongoing action against the Vietnam War.[86] By 1969, the UAW openly supported the Labor Party candidate, Gough Whitlam, whose loss of the 1969 Federal election was judged by the UAW as a 'moral victory' for the ALP as the Liberal Coalition lost several seats.[87] The UAW continued its peace and anti-conscription work, supporting conscientious objectors and remaining allied with SOS, the AICD and other organisations such as Youth Against Conscription and the Vietnam Action Committee. The UAW joined protests when Australia hosted South Vietnamese Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky early in 1967.[88] This contentious visit compelled Arthur Calwell to join protests, even demonstrating outside Parliament House as Holt hosted the South Vietnamese Prime Minister inside.[89] In Tasmania the UAW claimed its peace and anti-conscription work as the strongest facet of

[81] UAW Annual Report (Tas), 1966, p. 2, z236, Box 4, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[82] Minutes of Executive meeting of the UAW (NSW), 21 February 1966, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[83] Minutes of Management Committee Meeting of the UAW (NSW), 7 May 1966, p. 1, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[84] Minutes of Management Committee Meeting of the UAW (NSW), 24 September 1966, p. 2; Minutes of Executive Meeting of the UAW (NSW), 19 September 1966, p. 1, z326, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[85] UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1966, p. 2, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[86] Minutes of Management Committee Meeting of the UAW (NSW), 4 February 1967, p. 1, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU; 17th Annual Report of the UAW (Vic), 1967, p. 1, 1.4 Annual Reports, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[87] UAW Newsletter (Vic), November 1969, p. 1, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[88] Minutes of Management Committee Meeting of the UAW (NSW), 4 February 1967, p. 1, z236, Box 130, NBAC, ANU.
[89] Phillip Deery, '"Lock up Holt, Throw away Ky": The visit to Australia of Prime Minister Ky', *Labour History,* 109 (2015), 55-74 at 55.

the organisation and described working closely with the peace movement active in that state.[90] In Victoria, the UAW took part in regular demonstrations and action against the incarceration of conscientious objectors in the 'Campaign for Conscience on Conscription'.[91]

During the 1966 election year, UAW members had reported frequent disinterest from the public on the issue of conscription, although individual experiences differed. One member interpreted women's concern as being more acute than that of the men she polled.[92] Despite this perception, two years later the UAW urged its members to bring acquaintances who may be 'starting to question the Vietnam War' to an SOS meeting, demonstration or film screening to bring more women into the movement.[93] The UAW remained as committed as ever to the pursuit of peace in the late 1960s, yet the organisation began to question some of the 'antisocial' behaviour and aggressive tactics employed by its New Left counterparts during demonstrations.

One particular protest in 1968 led to the UAW labelling some participants behaviour as 'adverse to the peace movement'.[94] The protest against the Vietnam War was held outside the US Embassy and according to the UAW, violence was employed by both police and protesters. The UAW felt that this would alienate the wider public from the peace movement, while acknowledging that other peace activists believed that 'spectacular demonstrations are needed to shake the public out of its apathy'. Immediately following Holt's electoral victory in December 1966, members of the National Executive were already questioning whether public demonstrations had alienated potential supporters from 'white collar' backgrounds, later stressing that its members should understand that demonstrating publicly was not a requirement of UAW membership.[95]

Despite some misgivings about the increasing trend towards civil disobedience among student protesters, the UAW continued to join public action centred on peace, anti-conscription and the civil liberties of those who defied the government. Early in 1967, it was reported that the Queensland UAW's 'peace secretary', Norma Chalmers, suffered a broken heel at a protest against the Vietnam War and conscription. It was further reported that Chalmers' husband and a number of other protesters were arrested 'for no apparent reason'. The Queensland UAW expressed a sense of solidarity with the student protesters, denouncing the arrest of four university students over their refusal to pay fines for demonstrating.[96] In 1969 the UAW joined a 'liaison committee' made up of a

[90] UAW Annual Report (Tas), 11 November 1967, p. 6, z236, Box 4, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[91] UAW Newsletter (Vic), December 1969, p. 5; UAW Newsletter (Vic), February 1969, p. 1, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[92] Minutes of Management Committee Meeting of the UAW (NSW), 7 May 1966, p. 2, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[93] UAW Newsletter (Vic), March 1968, p. 3, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[94] UAW Newsletter (Vic), August 1968, p. 1, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[95] Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting of the UAW (NSW), 5 December 1966, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU; UAW Newsletter (Vic), Novemer 1969, p. 5, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[96] UAW Newsletter (Qld), March 1967, p. 1, z236, Box 1, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.

number of peace groups in Brisbane with the goal of repealing the amendments to the *National Services Act* which allowed conscription and to aid conscientious objectors.[97] After some internal deliberation, the UAW agreed to join the Vietnam moratoriums, an experience that Fabian and Loh assessed as giving the UAW 'a surge of exhilaration' after years of marginalisation while conducting peace work.[98]

Throughout the post-Menzies era, the UAW's action against conscription and Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War was consistent with its usual form of 'polite' activism. Since 1950, conservatively dressed women had calmly walked the streets of Australian cities largely ignored by the public – some pushing young children in strollers, many wearing aprons bearing peace slogans in order to circumvent public ordinances against political placards. During this time, the UAW and other organisations of the wider peace movement made little progress in convincing the Australian government or people to work for peace. The broadening and popularisation of the Australian anti-war movement strengthened and reenergised many UAW activists. However, the radicalisation of anti-war campaigners had the effect of alienating some within the UAW, when this new generation of leftist activists were dissatisfied with merely protesting government policy with propaganda, polite requests and calm demonstrations. The demands for cultural change which accompanied renewed efforts to secure peace, in addition to the rise of civil disobedience as a protest tool, left the largely middle-aged housewives of the UAW adrift and isolated. The rise of the New Left produced similar shockwaves within the Australian Communist Party. However, the CPA's response to this paradigm shift contributed to the split in the Party, weakening the decades-long ties between the CPA and UAW.

The emergence of the New Left and the Communist Party of Australia

While 1966 saw subtle and incremental changes to the culture and direction of the Liberal Party under Holt, Laurie Aarons' election in the same year as General Secretary of the CPA would precipitate major change within the Party. According to Mallory, Aarons and a group of likeminded cohorts in the leadership set about reinventing the Communist Party to better reflect the changing circumstances.[99] Aarons perceived the rigid orthodoxy and authoritarian structure of the CPA as redundant and ineffective. By the late 1960s, the divide between traditionalists and reformists within the Party had become irreconcilable, and at the 1970 Congress many long serving members of the National Committee were not reinstated due to their continued support of Soviet orthodoxy. President

[97] Minutes of Management Committee Meeting of the UAW (Qld), 28 January 1969, p. 1, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[98] Fabian and Loh, *Left Wing Ladies,* 98.
[99] Greg Mallory, 'The Communist Party of Australia, 1967-1975, and the Circumstances Surrounding the Formation of the Socialist Party of Australia', *The Hummer,* 3/7, (2002), http://www.labourhistory.org.au/hummer-vol-3-no-7/communist-party/.

of the UAW Freda Brown and her husband Bill were two of those members not returned to leadership positions.[100]

The firm stance taken by Brown in resisting New Left ideas from penetrating the Communist Party was ultimately ineffective. However, Brown's considerable influence over the policy direction and organisational culture of the UAW resulted in a more successful defence against New Left influence within the women's organisation. Of course, UAW members were free to make up their own minds regarding the growing radicalisation of youth and the associated 'counter-culture' emerging from student protests against conscription and the Vietnam War. Indeed, a leading member of the Queensland branch of the UAW, Alice Hughes, vocally supported the CPA's 'Left Action Conference' in 1969, which brought together representatives of the Old and New Left in a 'conference of left and anti-establishment forces'.[101] In reporting and promoting this conference, however, the Executive of the Queensland UAW was careful to stress that Hughes sponsored the conference as an individual, though it did urge the national branch of the UAW to consider sending an official delegate, which it did not.[102]

Despite the support of the Queensland branch for concerted action between leftist factions, demographic factors within the UAW likely predisposed many of its membership towards distaste for the unstructured, aggressively non-conformist activism displayed by New Left demonstrators. Milner presents a series of fraught communications from UAW members decrying the CPA's Trotskyist 'clique' and acceptance of the 'offensive' tactics displayed by women's liberationists, capturing the tension between Old and New Left factions following the 1971 split.[103] Further cementing the growing distance between the UAW and the CPA was the UAW's loyalty to the WIDF. The influence and guidance of the WIDF in the conduct and policy direction of the UAW was at least as strong as that of the CPA, prior to the reforms within the Party. Commitment to the WIDF's maternalist and humanitarian approach to activism provided the UAW with confidence in its own organisational conduct when contrasted with the nebulous form of organisation preferred by New Left activists.

The CPA's Left Action Conference was the manifestation of its 'coalition of the left', a strategy which acknowledged the similarities between the goals of various progressive political groups and would broaden the scope of activities and issues addressed by communists.[104] Old Left communists were critical of what they viewed as the new leadership's departure from traditional Marxist

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[100] Milner, *Swimming Against the Tide,* 137.
[101] 'A Conference of Left and Anti-establishment forces' [document], 22 November 1968, p. 1, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[102] Minutes of Management Committee Meeting of the UAW (Qld), 28 January 1969, p. 2, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[103] Milner, *Swimming Against the Tide,* 138-140.
[104] Mallory, 'The Communist Party of Australia, 1967-1975, and the Circumstances Surrounding the Formation of the Socialist Party of Australia', sec. 3, para. 1.

philosophy and the inclusion of allies from middle class, reformist backgrounds. In spite of the UAW's consistently stated policy and demonstrated practice of working with other organisations in pursuit of shared goals, the UAW's national leadership defaulted to the political position of the traditionalist faction of the CPA on this issue.[105]

Although the UAW did not habitually comment on internal conflicts or political disagreements within the Communist Party, its own records provide an insight into the growing divide between New Left and Old Left attitudes in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The UAW released a statement clarifying its support for traditional organisational forms, formal decision-making processes and the importance of hierarchical experience to the inculcation of women within traditional societal structures. The statement was in direct response to what the UAW referred to as 'the collective', a form of organisation preferred by 'several of the newer women's organisations' within the Women's Liberation Movement. The statement concludes with the UAW declaring:

> It may be that it has served some purpose in involving women in a form of meeting in which they felt at home, but we in the UAW believe it is important for women to learn to take their place at all levels of decision making, from the home right through to National Government, in the boardroom, in the committee room, union meetings and are convinced that by following the accepted form and rules, will make their presence felt more effectively.[106]

The language used within the statement is polite; however, there is an obvious subtext indicating that the UAW was generally scornful of the 'collective' approach. The statement refers to the 'bewilderment and fear' of some women towards 'committee structure and conduct of meeting', regarding such feelings as unimportant when considering the benefits of women learning to operate at 'all levels of decision making'. Consistent with its communist-derived dismissal of 'the patriarchy' as the root of sexual inequality, the UAW eschewed the idea that curated spaces for women to share ideas outside of traditional masculine structures were necessary or desirable. The UAW's statement indicates that while the WLM's goal was to challenge and recreate the societal structures limiting women's inclusion, the UAW encouraged women to conform to these structures in order to achieve equality. While the UAW leadership was aware of its lack of popular appeal in comparison to the rising popularity of the 'second wave', it displayed little interest in adopting a new organisational framework – preferring to criticise the New Left approach while defending its own.

However, philosophical disagreements regarding organisational structure did not concern all UAW members or branches in equal measure. While Victorian member Yvonne Smith has confirmed that

[105] See for example: 19th Annual Report of the UAW (Vic), 1969, p. 4, 1.4 Annual Reports, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[106] 'UAW – A structured organisation' [document], circa 1969, 1.4 Annual Reports, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

women in the UAW found it difficult to work with women's liberationists due to the unstructured system of organisation they employed, the Victorian UAW reportedly maintained a good working relationship with New Left activists in Melbourne.[107] Victorian members Betty Olle, Alma Moreton, Eileen Capocchi and Molly Hadfield gave their time to aid the efforts of the WLM and the Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) while maintaining ties to the UAW.[108] Similarly, the Queensland UAW complimented the student and youth movement in 1968, appearing to have a positive view of these activists in addition to a cordial, even collaborative relationship.[109] This characterisation is strengthened by the approval of individual UAW members from Queensland for the CPA's Left Action Conference and the coalition of the left.[110] Fabian and Loh have suggested that relations between the respective NSW branches of the UAW and the Women's Liberation Movement were fraught and antagonistic, and that the South Australian branch of the UAW was critical of Victorian UAW members for their positive attitudes towards New Left feminism.[111] If the Tasmanian or Western Australian branches engaged with any issues arising from the growing radicalisation of youth or the changing landscape of left-wing activism, it is not apparent from the content of their newssheets or newsletters from the late 1960s. Although the UAW would ultimately embrace the new peace and women's movements in the latter half of the 1970s, the onset of Second Wave Feminism challenged the UAW's perceived place within the women's movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The UAW and the Second Wave

In addition to the radicalisation of anti-conscription campaigners after the ALP's 1966 electoral loss, university students and staff were a major force in the emergence of the New Left in Australia. Murphy argues that the groundswell of student activism in the late 1960s originated with students protesting institutional policies within the universities themselves.[112] As the student movement diversified its activism to include anti-conscription and anti-war protests, the Women's Liberation Movement took root on campuses of universities in major Australian cities. Smith has identified that the first meeting of women using the name 'women's liberation' occurred in Sydney in late 1969.[113]

[107] Yvonne Smith interview with Jodi Ellis, 29 September 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[108] Fabian and Loh, *Left-wing Ladies,* 100.
[109] Interbranch Correspondence from QLD to National Branch, 29 August 1968, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[110] Minutes of Management Committee Meeting of the UAW (Qld), 28 January 1969, p. 2; 'A Conference of Left and Anti-establishment forces' [document], 22 November 1968, p. 2, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[111] Fabian and Loh, *Left-wing Ladies,* 100.
[112] Kate Murphy, 'Student activism at the University of New England in Australia's 'Long 1960s", *Journal of Australian Studies,* 43/2 (2019), 174-186 at 174-175.
[113] Evan Smith, 'When the Personal Became too Political: ASIO and the Monitoring of the Women's Liberation Movement', *Australian Feminist Studies,* 33/95, (2018), 45-60 at 48.

However, the increasing dialogue and activity around women's rights within New Left circles had been growing steadily since around 1967.

The emergence of the Women's Liberation Movement from the student movement immediately differentiated these activists from those within the UAW by two crucial factors. The first was demographic in nature. Generally speaking, activists emerging from tertiary institutions skewed younger and were more likely, by virtue of their university attendance, to be in a higher socio-economic bracket than the older, working class women of the UAW. While women's organisations of the 'Second Wave' have been largely characterised as middle class and tertiary educated, Lake asserts that this varied by location.[114] The Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL), a feminist lobbying group formed in 1972, has characterised its own members as being in their early thirties and confirmed the participation of middle class women, largely trained for white-collar, 'feminine' occupations and academia.[115] The UAW saw these differences – particularly the class divide – as the most significant factor in delineating its own organisational identity within the diversifying women's movement.

Second, and vitally, the evolution of the student and women's movement took hold at the grassroots level and as the nomenclature implies, swelled into a wave of action for women's rights and social change in Australia. The growth of the Women's Liberation Movement from city to city was 'organic', aided by the circulation of feminist publications from the USA.[116] While the UAW engaged in 'grassroots' activism through its suburban branches, this type of work did not typically spread outside of local areas. By the early 1970s it was clear that the UAW's appeal was demonstrably diminished when compared to the Women's Liberation Movement and adjacent feminist organisations, like the WEL. Betty Oke has since reflected that the UAW did not 'grow from the people' but was rather 'put onto the people'.[117] Consistent with Betty Oke's view, Meg Arrowsmith has mused that the UAW mobilised too many leading members from the Communist Party, suggesting that the growth of the organisation would have happened more organically if the rank and file had been given more opportunities for advancement.[118] Even in 1969, without the benefit of hindsight, the UAW perceived this lack of connection to the public mood, when it asked: 'The question is are we still too ingrown? Why does our programme not attract many more women?'[119]

As described at the beginning of the chapter, the UAW perceived the key to organisational growth as winning popular appeal among young, working class women. The rapid increase of women's activism

[114] Lake, *Getting Equal,* 219.
[115] 'WEL History. How it Began', https://www.wel.org.au/wel_history
[116] Smith, 'When the Personal Became too Political', 48.
[117] Betty Oke interview with Jodi Ellis, 12 February 1985, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[118] Meg Arrowsmith and Hilda Smith interview with Jodi Ellis, 16 October 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[119] Annual Report, UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1966, p. 3, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

within the student movement provided the UAW with a model of success among a population of women it considered incompatible with its ideal membership and ideological underpinnings. Although the UAW had worked alongside middle class women's organisations since its inception, these organisations shared a generational world view coloured by maternalism. The forward movement of women's rights was propelled in the late 1960s by the participation of activists from a new generation. This development likely confirmed to the UAW that its existing focus on the recruitment of young women from working class areas would mirror the trajectory of its 'middle class' counterparts. The divergent ideas about organisational structure, strategies for action and the importance of cultural change to emerge with the WLM were not seriously considered by the UAW as a factor to the WLM's success , or as relevant to its own survival or growth as an advocacy organisation.

By the end of the 1960s, women's organisations of the Second Wave were vocal and active in many of the same areas as the UAW including women's equality in industry and civic life. However, the UAW continued to claim the 'problems of working women' as its special purview, despite its difficulties in engaging such working women .[120] The UAW further cited groups in need of its assistance as: 'Widows, deserted wives, migrants, married women, single women and professional women.' The UAW suggested that working class women had been less active in campaigns around their own needs 'recently' and urged its members to motivate their peers in order to reinvigorate the UAW.[121] The assertion that working class women had been less active was not explored in detail within the newsletter, but in the Victorian UAW's subsequent history (circa 1970), several reasons are posited for waning participation. The reasons included: younger women moving to outer suburbs and becoming busy raising their families; pensioners becoming less active due to age; mothers shifting focus onto canteen work, school committees and mother's clubs; improved economic circumstances decreasing personal incentive to engage in activism; dejection at the lack of progress on issues of equality; the introduction of television reducing interest in outside activities; and the increase in women 'taking jobs' due to inflation.[122]

The notion that the Women's Liberation Movement had attracted any number of working-class women away from potential involvement in the UAW was not considered. Arguably, this was because many within the UAW considered 'middle class feminism' as ignorant of the needs of working-class women and therefore assumed it was unappealing to them. However, women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds – even members and former members of the UAW – were involved in the rise of Second Wave Feminism. Smith describes the various groups to come out of the Women's

[120] UAW Newsletter (Vic), November 1969, p. 6, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[121] UAW Newsletter (Vic), November 1969, p. 6, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[122] *Victorian Section, Union of Australian Women, 1950-1970*, c. early 1970s, p. 5, 6.2.1 Vic Section UAW 1950-1970, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

Liberation Movement as comprised of 'university students, young workers and more seasoned activists attached to the UAW or other leftist organisations'.[123] Zelda D'Aprano – a working class pioneer of the WLM, one time member of the UAW and co-founder of the Women's Action Committee (WAC) – has challenged the notion that class imbalance caused significant issues within the Women's Liberation Movement, despite acknowledging the existence of a class divide.[124] The UAW's appraisal of WLM activists as largely middle class, and therefor unaware of the economic plight of working class women was a legitimate criticism. However, the UAW National leadership's dismissive attitude towards all aspects of the WLM due to class differences, revealed stubborn resistance to new ideas within the UAW during the late 1960s and into the 1970s. The UAW's persistent struggle to rejuvenate its fading radicalism and court the participation of youthful members might have yielded better results, had the organisation as a whole been willing to accept the desire of young women to eschew the polite rigidity of their mothers' era.

Of course, the appeal of the WLM to younger women was not the only factor limiting participation within the UAW. In addition to the possible dilution of the UAW's recruiting pool, working class women favourable to left wing activism may have regarded the increased activity around women's rights as sufficient to render their participation unnecessary or superfluous. When coupled with the immediate economic problems disproportionately affecting working class women, resulting in time scarcity, the reasons for the class imbalance within the WLM and the lack of interest in joining the UAW among this cohort was likely multifaceted. In addition to class differences, there were other elements of the New Left and particularly the Women's Liberation Movement which rendered some UAW members ill at ease at the prospect of affiliation.

Private issues as political

The oft-cited mantra of the Women's Liberation Movement, 'the personal is political', was central to the discomfort felt towards the movement by older women's rights activists.[125] The idea that private relationships between husbands and wives within the home, for example, could come under political scrutiny was seen as a scandalous invasion of privacy. Although divorce law, women's financial rights within marriage and the custody of children had long been addressed by women's rights activists, discussion of issues such as domestic violence, sexuality and abortion remained taboo until the rise of Second Wave Feminism.[126] Discomfort around discussing interpersonal relationships extended to those between men and women in the workplace. In reference to the sexual harassment and poor treatment she experienced from comrades within the CPA and trade unions, Zelda D'Aprano has commented: 'It is no wonder that all men claim the personal is not political…this enables them to

[123] Smith, 'When the Personal became too Political', 48.
[124] D'Aprano, *Zelda,* 154-163.
[125] Smith, 'When the Personal became too Political', 46.
[126] Lake, *Getting Equal,* 72-76.

get away with almost anything'.[127] Within the UAW, interpersonal gender politics was not publicly discussed, outside of the occasional reporting of a particularly sexist remark from a male interlocuter. However, in the late 1960s the growing attention to violence against women, the right to bodily autonomy and patriarchal definitions of women's sexuality elicited a re-examination of these issues from the UAW. UAW members have since reflected on their experience with the reframing of formerly private issues as political.

Victorian member Eileen Cappocchi, who disavowed her communist membership to become a women's liberationist, explained that UAW women already viewed themselves as liberated women and that she identified confusion among her UAW peers at the expansion of women's rights to include 'personal' issues. Cappocchi stated that issues like abortion, rape and sexual orientation were simply not 'relatable' to most UAW members due to the generational divide.[128] This observation is consistent with the recollections of other UAW members from this era. Meg Arrowsmith has conceded that the feminist movement had to develop before 'intimate' issues could be discussed, a view repeated in various forms by former UAW members upon reflection.[129] UAW alumni Nell Johns, who commented that women's liberationists 'thought there were never women who stood up for women's rights before them', believed that the WLM was 'not reverent enough towards abortions.' Johns further reflected that prior to the emergence of Second Wave Feminism, rape and abortion were not perceived as political issues.[130]

Yvonne Smith has framed her experience with these emerging talking points differently. While she described the Women's Liberation Movement as 'wonderful', she recalled that it was difficult listening to young feminists discuss sexual liberation, when Smith herself worked in a union with 'very poor and deprived' women. Further to this point, Smith concluded that the Women's Liberation Movement did not focus enough on economic issues.[131] This early perception of unconscious class bias within the WLM foreshadowed later criticism of the tendency of 'second wave' feminists towards self-serving policies to the exclusion of other oppressed groups, eventually leading to the rise of 'intersectionality' within feminist theory.[132] However, Smith's criticism of women's liberationists is tempered by her concession that the UAW did not touch on the issue of domestic violence, despite

[127] D'Aprano, *Zelda,* 130.
[128] Eileen Cappocchi interview with Jodi Ellis, 2 October 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[129] Meg Arrowsmith interview with Jodi Ellis, 16 October 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[130] Nell Johns interview with Jodi Ellis, 16 July 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[131] Yvonne Smith interview with Jodi Ellis, 29 September 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[132] Indrani Ganguli, 'Feminism in Australia and Women from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds', *Social Alternatives,* 14/1 (1995), 58-59; Elizabeth Wilson, 'Feminism Today', *Hecate,* 30/1 (2004), 212-221 at 213; Lake, *Getting Equal,* 14-15.

being aware of its prevalence within economically deprived areas in which the organisation was active.[133] Freda Brown has stated that she views the UAW as a forerunner to the WLM and its New Left counterparts, paving the way alongside the wider peace movement of the 1950s and 1960s for the subsequent 'progressive cultural revolution'. Brown concedes that while the UAW did not engage in activism around 'sexual liberation', the goal of liberating women from their subordinate sexual role was 'not a deplorable position' to hold.[134] Despite the UAW's hesitancy to become active around certain issues brought forward by the WLM, in the late 1960s the organisation ultimately perceived the value of taking a position on abortion.

The UAW was open to discussion on abortion, but cautious. The organisation had previously published information on the contraceptive pill, using a relatively neutral tone in its presentation of that discussion. In April 1967 the NSW Management Committee of the UAW stated: 'Also thought our members should start to discuss the questions of abortion and prostitution, two matters which are topical questions today and as a women's organisation we should have a policy on these matters'.[135] It was reported that there were differing views among UAW members on the issue.[136] Following the attendance of a UAW delegate at the inaugural meeting of the association for law reform on abortion, the Victorian Management Committee cautioned that the maximum amount of information from reliable speakers was needed to approach to the issue.[137] In October 1968, the UAW finally delineated its position on abortion, supporting a policy of legalisation on medical grounds.[138]

While many members of the UAW maintained a conservative social outlook in comparison to their younger counterparts within the burgeoning Women's Liberation Movement, the women of the UAW ultimately embraced the increased awareness of women's issues in society. Raising women's status had been a fundamental goal of the UAW from its formation. However, campaigns pertaining to other core issues like peace and disarmament, industrial relations and cost of living often dominated UAW discourse, even within discussions of women's status. The end of the decade saw the UAW hone its focus on women's rights. Some points raised during a UAW meeting in Victoria in December 1969 included the need for apprenticeships and part-time work for girls and women; the plan to produce a booklet for distribution within unions on the emancipation of women; a 'pitch' for a course on equal pay and equal rights for women to the Victorian Labour College; the suggestion that equal pay

[133] Yvonne Smith interview with Jodi Ellis, 29 September 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[134] Freda Brown interview with Suzanne Fabian, 17 February 1995, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[135] Minutes of Management Committee Meeting of the UAW (NSW), 29 April 1967, p. 3, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[136] Minutes of Administrative Meeting of the UAW (NSW), 24 April 1967, p. 2, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[137] UAW Newsletter (Vic), June 1968, p. 2, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[138] Annual Report, UAW Newsletter (Vic), October 1968, p. 10, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

representative Joan Child speak to women unionists on the status of women; and the drafting of a letter of support for legalised abortion to the *Age* newspaper.[139] When contrasted with meeting minutes from earlier in the decade, minutes from the end of the 1960s show that the UAW was motivated and influenced by the renewed focus on women's rights to emerge with Second Wave Feminism.

The UAW adapts to change: moving forward and finding its niche

During its 1968 National Conference, the UAW celebrated the increased awareness of issues surrounding women's equality, brought about in part by the rise of young activists outside the organisation soon to identify as women's liberationists.[140] Alongside many members' discomfort towards issues of sexual liberation and the rise of civil disobedience existed a sense of hope at the increased dialogue around women's rights and peace. A 1968 report on the role of the UAW 'in today's changing world' asked: 'How can we keep up with and utilise the tremendous changes in women's status today?'[141] Despite the UAW's faltering connection to left wing movements in the late 1960s, the organisation reasserted its activism as 'always progressive in nature', claiming it 'did not seek the political tag' it had been given.[142] The uncertainty surrounding the UAW's place within the women's movement was further compounded by the continued suspicion of its political connections from some sections of the public, including the Australian National Council of Women (NCWA).

In 1969, the NCWA informed the UAW it was still unable to affiliate due to the UAW's perceived status as a 'political organisation'.[143] This was despite collaborative efforts between the organisations over the equal pay campaign. As the peak Australian body representing women's groups operating under a traditional 'maternalist' approach to advocacy, this rejection signified the UAW's status as still too radical for its generational counterparts – an alienating prospect as the UAW simultaneously struggled to accept the more militant ideas of the WLM. Fabian and Loh have described the UAW during the late 1960s as 'beset by contradictions' and self-doubt.[144] Two months after the NCWA's comments, the Victorian UAW discussed the advisability of having 'a person as National President who is publicly tied to a political party' – a reference to Freda Brown, who at this time was still a member of the CPA National Committee.[145] Despite the Victorian Management Committee intending

[139] Minutes of Officers Meeting of the UAW (Vic), 17 December 1969, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[140] 'Conference shows scope of UAW activities', *Tribune,* 23 October 1968, 4.
[141] UAW (NSW) Organisation Report, precis by M. Stewart, c. 1968, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[142] UAW Newsletter (Vic), November 1969, p. 5, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[143] Minutes of UAW Management Meeting (Vic), 18 June 1969, p. 1, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[144] Fabian and Loh, *Left Wing Ladies,* 93.
[145] Minutes of UAW Management Committee Meeting (Vic), 20 August 1969, p. 2, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

to bring these concerns to Brown during the subsequent National Conference, she would remain the National President of the UAW for many years to come.

In 1969 the UAW attempted to address organisational problems via round table discussions, facilitating a weekend retreat for members to share new ideas, discuss campaigns and air their grievances.[146] The UAW subsequently produced a report on the 'Image of the UAW'. Part of it read:

> The UAW needs to work very closely with as many other organisations as possible, while still maintaining its own individuality. Other organisations need to know and respect our work, so that by our work we will be judged. The UAW is a national body but is only as strong as its individual members. [147]

While the UAW perceived an advantage in working with its contemporaries in the late 1960s, it was also at pains to differentiate itself. The UAW had previously urged collaboration with other organisations on mutually advantageous campaigns, regardless of class, ideology or political affiliation. Prior to the emergence of the New Left, these calls for unity with women's organisations of differing demographic makeup and organisational philosophy did not routinely qualify the need to assert the independence or distinctiveness of the UAW. Nevertheless, the UAW had been attempting to make inroads into other women's organisations throughout the late 1960s. In 1967 the Queensland branch of the UAW declared the theme of 1967 should be 'getting to know you', which would incorporate 'building the UAW' and befriending other women and women's organisations.[148] In early 1969, the Preston branch of the UAW reported that it had forged connections with other women's organisations through their town hall meetings, which it was hoped would 'broaden our interests and help our work'.[149] In February of the same year, the UAW reported to its members that the first test case on equal pay for women would begin proceedings at the Arbitration Court on 25 February. The Executive stated that the UAW was 'hoping to join with other organisations in some activities around this, but no details are yet finalised'.[150]

The UAW's involvement in the equal pay campaign, discussed in Chapter Three, was eventually the catalyst for its most successful collaboration with organisations and activists involved in the rise of Second Wave Feminism, in addition to its maternalist contemporaries and the trade union movement. The UAW was bolstered by its involvement in the string of cases before the Arbitration Court that led to the implementation of 'equal pay for work of equal value' in 1972. Following the UAW's contribution to the 'Equal Pay case' in 1969, the UAW gave a positive assessment of trade union involvement, and particularly Bob Hawke who, as the representative of the Australasian Meat

[146] UAW Newsletter (Vic), February 1969, p. 1, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[147] UAW Newsletter (Vic), November 1969, p. 5, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[148] UAW Newsletter (Qld), March 1967, p. 2, z236, Box 1, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[149] UAW Newsletter (Vic), December 1969, p. 3, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[150] UAW Newsletter (Vic), February 1969, p. 1, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

Industry Employees Union, presented the case to the Arbitration Commission.[151] However, in the mid-1970s, the UAW rejected its previous strategy of deferring to the trade union movement in the campaign for equal pay.[152] The strengthening of the women's movement gave UAW members the confidence to reassess their role within left-wing political activism, with one member commenting that with the emergence of Second Wave Feminism, 'members stopped seeing themselves as handmaidens of the left'.[153] While the paradigm shifting aspect of the Women's Liberation Movement and its New Left counterparts served to diminish the UAW's radical status and alienate some members, the organisation continued to pursue its dream of a more equitable society in the post-Menzies era.

The UAW remained committed to the inclusion of women within the parliamentary system. In 1966 the UAW celebrated the first woman elected as an ALP representative in Queensland parliament since 1932.[154] When Indigenous activist and poet, Oodgeroo Noonuccal (known at the time as Kath Walker) decided to stand as an ALP candidate in the 1969 State election, the Queensland UAW pledged practical support to her campaign.[155] Freda Brown celebrated Noonuccal's candidacy while remaining pragmatic in her expectations, writing: 'In any case, we're sure you will make him think so hard, he'll be a better man afterwards'.[156] This was in reference to Noonuccal's opponent Keith Hooper, who had held the electorate of Greenslopes for the Liberal party since 1957. Noonuccal's campaign was unsuccessful, an outcome Sue Abbey suggests was in part due to her advocacy for Aboriginal land rights which was 'slow to gain political support'.[157]

In collaboration with its Indigenous affiliates, of which Oodgeroo Noonuccal was perhaps the most prominent, the late 1960s saw the UAW further promote the rights for Aboriginal girls and women, stressing that Australia's Indigenous community should be included in efforts to stop systemic discrimination and should be afforded the right to self-determination.[158] Following the success of the 1967 Referendum on Indigenous citizenship, the UAW continued to pursue its work amongst Indigenous communities, setting up a scholarship for Aboriginal girls and remaining active in campaigns organised by the Aboriginal Advancement League (AAL), the Aboriginal Rights Council

[151] 19th Annual Report of the UAW (Vic), 1969, p. 1, 1.4 Annual Reports, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[152] *Work by Women for Women, 1950-1975 Souvenir History*, (c. 1975), p. 3, 6.2.2 Victorian Section: Union of Australian Women: 1950-1975, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[153] UAW Meeting with Suzanne Fabian and Morag Loh, 20 February 1995, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[154] 'Working Woman' UAW newssheet (Qld), 1 July 1966, z236, Box 1, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[155] UAW Minutes of Management Committee Meeting (Qld), 25 November 1968, p. 2, z236, Box 1, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[156] Correspondence from Freda Brown to Kath Walker, 5 November 1968, z236, Box 130, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[157] Sue Abbey, 'Noonuccul, Oodgeroo (1920-1993)', The Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/noonuccal-oodgeroo-18057
[158] UAW Newsletter (Vic), June 1968, p. 6, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

and others.[159] In 1968 the Queensland UAW collaborated with Indigenous representatives, the Brisbane International Women's Day Committee and select trade unions to conduct a seminar on Aboriginal rights as a 'Human Rights Year' event.[160] The seminar heard a diverse array of speakers and gave support to the pursuit of land rights for Indigenous communities, issuing a statement to the Federal Government and initiating a petition. In West Australia, branches of the UAW worked closely with the AAL, routinely attending meetings and exchanging delegates.[161] While the paradigm shift within the women's rights movement caused the UAW to lose confidence in certain aspects of its organisational identity and strive fruitlessly for growth, its efforts to elevate marginalised communities and make small improvements in the lives of struggling women remained the backbone of the organisation.

The UAW's 'bread and butter' work continued throughout the social upheaval at the end of the 1960s. This included monitoring the prices, quality and safety of consumables, supporting campaigns and efforts to improve social services, wages, housing and education, supporting strikers, petitioning for youth centres and community improvements along with calls to release political prisoners abroad and end racial injustice, war and poverty globally. The UAW also maintained focus on the activities of women's organisations overseas, in colonial and developing nations – for example, taking an interest in the ways in which Pakistani women were shaping their country in 1969.[162] The UAW continued to celebrate cultural diversity and engage with campaigns around antiracism, internationally and locally. However, the UAW adopted some issues during this time that were new to the organisation, or otherwise increased its focus on previously minor campaigns.

In 1969 the UAW called for the protection through scientific management of the natural Australian environment.[163] This included drawing attention to the plight of the Great Barrier Reef.[164] The UAW had supported the campaign against land clearing and development within the 'Little Desert' area of Western Victoria, widely regarded as a pivotal event in the rise of environmentalism in Australia.[165] In April 1967, the UAW urged its members to attend the Trade Hall Council's 'Natural Resources and Living Standards Convention' as delegates, citing a wide array of societal and environmental topics for consideration at the convention, including the management of Australia's natural resources, intelligent town planning and the use of insecticides and pesticides.[166] The organisation had

[159] 17th Annual Report of the UAW (Vic), 14 October 1967, p. 3, 1.4 Annual Reports, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[160] Summary on Seminar on Aboriginal Rights, 14 July 1968, z236, Box 130, UAW Records NBAC, ANU.
[161] See for example: UAW Newsletter (WA), May 1969, p. 7, z236, Box 3, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.
[162] UAW Newsletter (Vic), February 1969, p. 5, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[163] UAW Newsletter (Vic), June 1969, p. 3, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[164] UAW Management Committee Meeting (Vic), 24 September 1969, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[165] UAW Management Committee Meeting (Vic), 15 October 1969, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[166] UAW Newsletter (Vic), April 1967, p. 1, 4.2.1 Newsletters, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

questioned the safety of pesticides from the early 1960s but increased activity around the issue in the later part of the decade. In 1967 the Victorian UAW set up a sub-committee to research and report on pesticide use and in 1969, joined efforts to regulate the use of harmful detergents.[167] From 1966, the UAW supported efforts to have cigarette packaging labelled 'poison' and the tar and nicotine content to be divulged.[168] The UAW further declared support for the Anti-Cancer Council and urged the Federal government to adopt a 'clear policy on smoking and health'.[169] The progress on issues raised by the UAW following Menzies' resignation as Prime Minister provided the impetus for the organisation to expand its focus to areas of interest outside of its long term campaigns.

Conclusion

In 1967 the Tasmanian UAW declared: 'To build a bigger and better organisation is the aim of us all. To remain at our present size and scope of work does not fill the needs of women today.'[170] This statement encapsulates the UAW's experience in the late 1960s. While the 'size and scope' of UAW work did not manifest into the mass organisation it had dreamed of in 1956, the preoccupation with growth and popular appeal underscored the UAW's organisational uncertainty in the post-Menzies era. The lofty goal of filling the needs of all women was likely never within the UAW's reach. However, the effort it expended in aiding specific, often niche groups was generally effective and beneficial. The UAW expressed consternation over its inability to attract and politicise large numbers of working women. But its work to highlight the needs of working mothers and to lobby unions for more part time roles, in addition to the procurement of government subsidised childcare and the UAW's participation in the equal pay campaign, were pragmatic and effective ways to help working women who did not have the time, skills or motivation to achieve these things for themselves.

The UAW membership's general distaste for aggressive tactics during demonstrations and for publicly discussing sexual liberation were indicative of the generational divide between activists of the Old and New Left. The shifting social mores of the late 1960s caught the UAW off guard, and while some within the organisation were able to embrace a more progressive society, others were hard pressed to adapt. During the 1970s, the UAW's disengagement from the CPA and the fundamental difference of approach by the Women's Liberation Movement further reduced the UAW's capacity to leverage relationships in support of its campaigns. However, while the UAW observed the unprecedented growth of the women's movement with occasional resentment and insecurity, its focus on assisting and including women from marginalised communities set it apart from other women's

[167] 17th Annual Report of the UAW (Vic), 14 October 1967, p. 4, 1.4 Annual Reports, UAW Records, VU Special Collections; UAW Management Committee Meeting (Vic), 15 October 1969, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[168] 'Cigarettes Poison', *The Canberra Times,* 17 October 1966, 3.
[169] Resolutions of the 16th Annual General Meeting of the UAW (Vic), 1966, p. 2, 1.4 Annual Reports, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[170] UAW Annual Report (Tas), 11 November 1967, p. 6, z236, Box 4, UAW Records, NBAC, ANU.

organisations.[171] Beyond 1970, the UAW's inclusive and perceptive attitude towards Indigenous and migrant women was often ahead of the curve within the women's movement. UAW members were among the pioneers of intersectional awareness and were increasingly recognised for individual service to their communities, despite the flagging effectiveness of the organisation as a whole.[172]

The UAW's connection to the WIDF remained strong and productive through dual office holder Freda Brown and other internationally active members like Audrey McDonald. Throughout the 1970s the UAW campaigned on the world stage and lobbied the Australian government on issues like Apartheid, the rights of the child and maintaining international peace through engagement with the UN.[173] Audrey McDonald assumed the UAW National leadership in the mid-1970s and was appointed to the first NSW State government Women's Council as a representative.[174] As the status of women in public life increased through the efforts of women's rights activists and the systemic implementation of gender equality principles by State and Federal governments, the UAW's membership shifted its focus back onto economic issues and those affecting seniors – the dominant cohort within the UAW by the 1980s and 1990s.

Although the size, impact and relevance of the UAW began to decline in the late 1960s, the organisation did not close its doors until five decades later. This is a testament to the important legacy of the UAW within the women's and labour movements during the Menzies era. The character of the UAW's activism provided a relatable path to women's rights for other women of the same generation and social upbringing. UAW member Marj Lambert remarked that the UAW 'didn't set the world on fire but changed a lot of people's minds'.[175] This observation recognises the UAW's achievements while conceding its limits. However, if the UAW 'didn't set the world on fire', it did play a part in creating the conditions and precedent necessary for the next generation of progressive activists to do so.

[171] McDonald and McDonald, *Intimate Union,* 164.
[172] Fabian and Loh, 119; 127.
[173] McDonald and McDonald, *Intimate Union,* 263; 246.
[174] Ibid, 234.
[175] Marg Lambert interview with Suzanne Fabian, 16 February 1995, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.

Conclusion

The UAW was a modestly sized organisation – smaller and less well received by the mainstream media and elected representatives than many of its contemporaries during the 1950s and 1960s. At the height of its membership, the most generous estimate of its numbers was between five and six thousand members nationally in the late 1950s.[1] The UAW executive itself conceded that less than half of these members were 'official', having paid their membership dues and participated in UAW campaigns.[2] When UAW activities did receive public attention, the organisation was easily dismissed by critics of its policy through the invocation of the UAW's communist connections or by disparaging the role of women in political activity. The rank-and-file membership of the UAW was drawn from a pool of women variously described as 'housewives', women who 'couldn't write a letter' and women who joined for 'something to do'.[3] None of these factors suggests a legacy that altered the course of women's political development or made a significant contribution to the pursuit of gender equality in Australia. Nevertheless, this thesis has demonstrated that the UAW did play a decisive role in politicising working class women during the Menzies era.

The literature reviewed in the first chapter of this thesis certainly hints at a substantial contribution by the UAW to the political development of Australian women. Numerous historians have provided tantalisingly brief analyses of the UAW's activism which highlight its work and are collectively suggestive of a historical significance for which the UAW has not been sufficiently credited.[4] Simic and Ellis similarly acknowledge and showcase the UAW's function as a vehicle for housewives to exercise civic involvement and political action, while also considering the reasons why the UAW has not been more heavily featured within works on the role of women in Australian political history.[5] The UAW's ideological position, its redefinition of acceptable forms of action for women and its eventual sidelining by the WLM, were all factors related to the UAW's frustrated designs to become a

[1] NAA: A6122/44, 1448, Report on UAW, c. 1960, p. 1.
[2] Minutes of administrative meeting, April 1958, p. 6, 1.3 Meetings: Agendas & Minutes, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[3] Nell Johns interview with Jodi Ellis, 16 July 1984; Hilda Smith interview with Jodi Ellis, 14 August 1984, 6.4.6 Cassette recordings, UAW Records, VU Special Collections.
[4] Evan Smith, 'When the Personal Became too Political: ASIO and the Monitoring of the Women's Liberation Movement', *Australian Feminist Studies,* 33, 95, (2018); Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal. The History of Australian Feminism* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1999); Joy Damousi, ''Women – Keep Australia Free!': Women Voters and Activists in the 1951 Referendum Campaign', *Australian Historical Studies,* 44/1 (2013); Kevin O'Toole, 'The Union of Australian Women: The Childcare Issue', *Labour History*, 75 (1998), 144-154; Georgina Murray and David Peetz, *Women of the Coal Rushes* (Sydney: University of NSW Press, 2010), 94; Tom O'Lincoln, 'Against the stream: Women and the left, 1945-1968' in *Rebel Women in Australian Working Class History*, eds. Sandra Bloodworth and Tom O'Lincoln (Melbourne: Interventions, 1998), 87-100.
[5] Zora Simic, 'Butter not Bombs. A Short History of the Union of Australian Women', *History Australia*, 4/1 (2007), 07.1-07; Jodi Ellis, 'The Union of Australian Women: 1950-1980', Honours Diss., La Trobe University, 1980.

mass organisation of women. Exploring these aspects of the UAW's history provides insight into the UAW's shortcomings and setbacks; but is also fundamental to understanding the ways in which the UAW politicised women in an environment antithetical to political and social progressivism.

The UAW's activism was heavily informed by the interplay of class, gender and politics, discussed in detail within Chapter Two. The last two imperatives were at times the catalyst for criticism of the UAW by politicians and the Australian public, who variously derided the organisation as a communist front or otherwise belittled UAW members as nothing more than handmaidens to their husbands and children. This criticism did not appear to affect UAW activists negatively, but rather motivated the organisation to declare that housewives and mothers were directly affected by the political and economic policies of state and federal governments. The UAW argued convincingly that domestically engaged wives and mothers had a right to contribute to these issues on the basis of managing household budgets, concern for their children's education, use of community amenities and their commitment to a compassionate, functional society.

The redefinition of political issues as relevant to Australian housewives was a key aspect of the UAW's activism and played a fundamental role in the UAW's attempts to politicise working class housewives and Australian women generally. The UAW's craft classes and social events were carried out with the explicit intention of stimulating discussion to further the political education of its members. The contents of fraction meetings between UAW cadres and CPA functionaries, discussed in the thesis, leave little doubt that the UAW was primarily a vehicle for political education in the eyes of the communist leadership. The organisation's community advocacy work was an effective recruitment and training tool, in addition to being motivated by a genuine desire among UAW members to improve working-class communities. The UAW's opposition to the anti-working-class policies of the Menzies government was a catalyst for the its occasional support for the Australian Labor Party, but ultimately the thesis has confirmed the UAW's commitment to the policies of the CPA. It was this adherence to Marxist philosophy which drove the UAW's efforts to integrate women into industry and militant industrial action.

The investigation by the thesis of the UAW's politicisation of women has determined that a major facet of this process was the attempt to form a 'core group of women in industry' to lead the UAW. This was a goal mandated by the Communist Party.[6] Although the UAW would remain largely represented by housewives, its efforts on behalf of working women were consistent throughout the Menzies era. When increasing numbers of UAW members entered the workforce in the mid-1960s, the idea of a core group of working women leading a militant wing of the UAW in industrial action was revealed as untenable. Cultural expectations on women resulted in working UAW members' inability to participate in political activism due to domestic and childcare duties monopolising their

[6] NAA: A6122/16, 1174, report, 'C. P. of A. Women's Cadres' Meeting', 19 June 1956, pp. 2-6.

free time after work. While the UAW was frustrated by this roadblock to participation, it did not conceive of challenging these gender norms, ultimately leaving this strategy to the women of the second wave. Instead, the UAW found that women required political development before entering paid employment so that they could pass on their knowledge at work.

The UAW had at its disposal alternative avenues of engaging women with industrial activism outside of its pursuit of working women. One strategy was to forge connections with trade union women's committees and auxiliaries. This activity served two purposes: the involvement of domestically engaged women in industrial agitation, furthering the UAW's goal of politicisation; and the increased proximity of the UAW to 'large industrial unions' to which the women's auxiliaries were affiliated. Chapter Three has demonstrated the UAW's willingness to activate women in the labour movement without recruiting them into its own ranks. This indirect influence was also pursued through contact with trade unions. The UAW disseminated its various publications, including its newsletter, leaflets and *Our Women* to trade union offices which had been identified as representing industries with a substantial contingent of women workers. The UAW's collaboration with the trade union movement and promotion of equal pay between the sexes in the 1960s, as shown by the thesis, to be an effective contribution to the achievement of legislated wage equality in the landmark decision of 1972.

The UAW's work to politicise Australian women was influenced as much by the idea that working class activism was most effective when industrially based as it was by the idea that women would be motivated by humanitarianism. Chapter Four argued that UAW campaigns for peace and disarmament were largely presented as humanitarian efforts to prevent the suffering of children overseas and the moral corruption of children in Australia. The UAW's affiliation to the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) engendered the organisation's maternalist outlook and exerted significant influence over the policies of the UAW. Political internationalism has been found within the thesis to have broadly informed the UAW's programme surrounding Australian campaigns, linking international talking points like anti-colonialism with national concerns like Indigenous rights. The resistance of the UAW to American influence on Australian culture was a partial product of the UAW's political allegiance to Soviet communism but was also consistent with the public mood at the time. The effect of American popular culture on the moral wellbeing of Australian children was a common concern of the Menzies era, gifting the UAW a rare platform with popular appeal and existing support during its television standards and war toys campaigns. Through the invocation of maternal responsibility, the UAW introduced global issues to Australian women.

The UAW's framing of different cultures and nationalities as socially enriching and comprising universal human qualities was unusually progressive in the Menzies era. The White Australia Policy, in addition to fears of communist aggression, fostered widespread xenophobia and parochialism within the general population. Staunch commitment to the eradication of systemic racism, particularly

towards Indigenous Australians, was demonstrated by the UAW through support for Aboriginal organisations and political candidates, political action on behalf of Indigenous women, girls and workers, and the inclusion of Indigenous women in its own ranks. The UAW's promotion of self-determination for Indigenous people extended internationally. The UAW's normalisation of intercultural cooperation and friendship within its literature and through its actions evidence its contribution to the development of more inclusive attitudes among its working class base. The UAW embraced the process of globalisation, furthering the politicisation and humanitarianism of its members. This aspect of the UAW would remain progressive well into the 1970s, even as its radicalism waned in other areas.

The end of the Menzies era in 1966 occurred in the same year that the UAW renewed its focus on attracting a younger membership. The thesis has shown that the UAW became progressively disconnected with the issues raised by younger women towards the end of the decade. The organisation grappled with an aging and increasingly inactive membership and the internal upheaval occurring within the CPA. As the anti-progressive trend within Australian politics ebbed with the Menzies era, the UAW's programme became less radical in the evolving landscape of left-wing activism. The youth, peace and crucially the women's movement grew more vocal and more radical at the end of the 1960s and many UAW members balked at the shift they perceived in the tactics and philosophy of this new iteration of activists. The thesis has demonstrated that despite the UAW's discomfort with the WLM's 'the personal is political' mantra and its unsuccessful attempts to renew its membership by appealing to 'young marrieds', the UAW persevered in the pursuit of social justice in the latter period. The UAW's representation of older, working class housewives, working mothers and Indigenous women emphasised that, in spite the end of its 'golden age', there was still a niche to be filled by an organisation representing women who potentially struggled to relate to radical feminism for various reasons.

The UAW's relevance and its aspirations for mass appeal receded during the 1970s. Although the organisation continued to operate in a reduced capacity until 2020, its shaping of women's role within left wing activism during the Menzies era encapsulates the UAW's impact on the history of the Australian women's movement. Through casual interactions, targeted propaganda and political education, the women of the UAW fermented consideration of political ideas within their own ranks and throughout their social networks and workplaces. These ordinary working-class women found an outlet for their abilities and natural inclination to improve their communities through the UAW. The more politically inclined leadership of the UAW made up of women from various backgrounds and linked through their commitment to the CPA, used their Party experience to effectively lead the UAW in the pursuit of a more equitable society. In collaboration with peace, trade union and women's organisations, the UAW took part in campaigns of significance to women, workers and society at large. The UAW connected Australian political issues to world affairs, contributing to the increasing

awareness of the impact of foreign policy and post-colonial globalisation on ordinary Australian families. The UAW's presentation of political talking points as relevant and palatable to housewives likely had some impact on the topics discussed by women with whom it had contact. Through these activities, the UAW conducted a comprehensive campaign of politicisation, targeting women and their interlocuters within working class communities during the Menzies era. In this way, the UAW holds an important place in the history of both the labour and women's movements in Australia.

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