A history of the Clothing and Allied Trades Union

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CHAPTER EIGHT

WAR AND REGULATION

1939–1950
The Second World War finally reduced high unemployment rates and, in the longer run, brought considerable economic change. Although unemployment was still at 3.6 per cent in mid-1941, it fell below one per cent in the following year. With up to 800 000 people in the armed forces, the paid work-force was re-shaped, with metal trades' employment doubling and with a huge increase in the number of women in industry. Indeed, by 1943-44 there were more women employed in the metal than the clothing trades.¹ Throughout the War, new tools, machines and new products came from the heavy and chemical industries, where there was great technological change. After the War, the widely expected depression did not appear. Instead, manufacturing was protected by shortages of foreign exchange and by disruption in other countries' economies. Almost unthinkably, unemployment remained at the extraordinarily low levels at which it had stabilised in the War.²

In the War there were unique levels of economic regulation. A National Security Act, which provided for Regulations which could

1. About 55 200 women in the metal trades (16.2 per cent of the total, T. Sheridan, op.cit., p.160). Although the 'official' total for women in the clothing trade was 59 948 this includes 'boots' and some other sections outside the Union's scope. Exclusive of footwear workers, the total was 51 971 women. In 1943 there were 42 870 female clothing trades unionists.

over-ride all other legislation, had been introduced by the Conservative Government, under Menzies, in 1939. These Regulations were developed - by Labor - to cover almost all aspects of the economy. By 1942 there was rationing of many goods, including clothing, and Australians had accepted direction of their lives by an imposing array of state instrumentalities. The supreme organisation was perhaps the Manpower Directorate which, from early 1942, decided upon the allocation of labour. Every worker in the country was subject to classification. Vital or 'protected industries' were declared in which dismissals were forbidden. Equally, the movement of workers became a matter for Manpower, not of individual volition.

Through Advisory Committees, unions had a formal role in the implementation of policies but the state more usually stood between rather than brought together unions and employers. Military requirements were met by an uneasy mixture of private production and state supervision. In tendering for contracts most employers used a 'cost-plus' system in which they costed a project and added a profit margin. Union opposition to this was overcome by the ease with which over-award wages could be won.3

Throughout the economy, particularly at the peak of the war crisis in 1942-43, wages and prices were supposed to be pegged. The mobilisation of the nation was far greater than during the First World

3. S.J. Butlin, op.cit., pp.310-11. Such agreements were illegal because of 'wage-pegging' under the National Security Regulations.
War. This was particularly apparent in relation to the role of women and the response of the trade unions.

In many ways women's roles were broadened. Women enlisted, albeit in the 'women's services'. In the armed forces they often took up men's tasks as well as traditional 'women's work'. In World War One, women's organisations had been volunteer agencies but some were now para-military. In these ways, the War might be seen as a time of female emancipation. However, the National Security Regulations meant that the state exercised great control over workers. Manpower's work 'was increasingly direction of womanpower', with particular emphasis upon the need to maintain munitions production. In all, the number of women in waged civilian employment rose from 644,000 in 1939 to 855,000 in 1944. The history of these women remains ill-recorded. Although the impact of the Women's Employment Board is fairly well documented, it dealt with only 70-80,000 women, in jobs or industries affected by men's absence on military service. It did not hear logs of claims in quite the same way as the Court; it only

7. A. Summers, op.cit., p.418. This remains true. It should be noted that most women remained in 'non-factory' employment. The number of women in manufacturing industries increased from 152,515 in 1938/39 to a peak of 227,365 in 1943/44. At the same time the number of men per hundred women fell from 271 to 237. (CYB, No.33, 1940; No.36, 1944/45.)
dealt with work previously performed by men. 9 The ACATU's only contact with the Board was that Federal Secretary Wallis was one of the two representatives for workers.

Most women remained in 'women's industries' although, because of the Board, wages and conditions were better in other trades. The War, for many women, was thus a period of direction by the state, hard work, long hours and, perhaps, frustration that other avenues were not more accessible. Clothing was a central part of this framework. It was vital to the War effort, especially in 1943 when the huge American presence in the south-west Pacific necessitated increased production of food and clothing. 10 An 'acute shortage' of clothing was declared which led to important changes, at last, in women's wages and conditions. Women responded, it seems, as keenly as men to the needs of War but overall strike patterns and, more precisely, other conflicts, merit some attention. 11 These responses were both cause and effect of the policies of the trade union movement.

At first, neither women nor unionists in general had been much affected by the War. Had there been any immediate planning, union co-operation would have been unlikely because of the Menzies' Government's off-hand treatment of organised labour. Union hostility


11. See ibid., especially p.94, for strong argument suggesting that women's response was quite different.
was confirmed when, under the guise of national security, the Government suppressed the CPA. In 1941, three events transformed the union movement's war policy. For communists and some others on the left, the German invasion of the Soviet Union changed the very nature of the War from another imperialist entanglement to an assault on socialism and 'the democratic peoples'. The advent of the Curtin Labor Government made union co-operation possible and, almost immediately, the entry of Japan to the War all but necessitated it. The ACTU pledged itself to support Curtin's Government and most unions zealously backed the War effort. The number of strikes fell, workers laboured longer and often harder whilst craft unions accepted non-apprenticed and, finally, female labour. Political change followed: Curtin persuaded the labour movement to abandon its fiercely held opposition to conscription for overseas service.

In return for workers' co-operation during the crisis, the unions demanded the retention, as far as possible, of Award conditions and guarantees of post-war change. Unions wanted price-fixing to continue, the state's role in the economy maintained, nationalisation of some industries and the reform of the arbitration system. In 1944 they were frustrated by the failure of referenda designed to increase

14. The AEU's acceptance of 'dilution' and then women was a long process. See T. Sheridan, op.cit., pp.159-63. Perhaps the most impressive turnabout in war co-operation (apart from the CPA) was in the Miners' Federation which agreed to a code 'to prevent stoppages and encourage increased production', R. Gollan, The Coalminers, p.224.
the Commonwealth Government's peace-time power. Thereafter, the High Court's conservatism and the increasingly cautious Government policies of Curtin's successor, Ben Chifley, exacerbated frustrations.

The rise of the CPA's credibility and even respectability following the invasion of, and then resistance by, the Soviet Union saw the Party's membership reach an all-time high of 22 000 in 1944. To its leadership of the Miners and Waterside Workers in NSW it added influence in the AEU and a great range of other unions. Its voice was the loudest in calling for a new kind of social order. At the ACTU Congress of 1945, the Party built upon the advances it had made since 1941 and upon a base of industrial unrest. Congress demanded substantial wage increases, an inquiry into the 'living wage', equal pay for the sexes and it agreed to internal changes which favoured the left. Soon after, industrial action to secure the forty-hour week was discussed. The Government remained unwilling to act at the ACTU's behest. There were some reforms of the arbitration system in 1947 but the Court was not done away with. Amendments to the Arbitration Act in 1949 were directed at unions themselves, allowing for the Court's interference in ballots and union procedure. This piece of Labor legislation was endorsed by the ACTU, something which would have been impossible in 1945. Since then, however, there had been a drastic re-alignment of forces.15

15. This account is largely drawn from J. Hagan, ACTU, especially pp.117, 146-50, 190, 193.
Opposition to the CPA had been quietly growing. Since at least the Spanish Civil War many Catholics had been concerned about what they saw as communism's anti-clericalism. These Catholics were, at first, as disenchanted with capitalism as with communism but they came increasingly to concentrate upon the power of communism in trade unions. They also promoted the vision of a new Australia - highly populated, industrially efficient and disciplined and with the land thrown open to small-holders. These ideas found form in the National Secretariat of Catholic Action, formed in Melbourne in 1937, and a capable and energetic advocate in B.A. Santamaria, Director of Catholic Action from 1940. The better to promote these ideas he formed the Catholic Social Studies Movement in 1942. This semi-secret body had links with the Church, through the Archbishop of Melbourne; and with the labour movement, through J.V. Stout, the Secretary of the MTHC, H.M. Cremean, deputy-Leader of the Victorian Parliamentary ALP and P.J. Clarey, President of the ACTU. 'The Movement', with the backing of parts of the Church, began to agitate for action against communist unions.

By 1943 there were some divisions within the labour movement in Victoria, but it was in NSW that the break came. There the conservative leadership of the Labor Council needed moral and practical aid against its opponents. In 1945 the NSW ALP agreed to establish 'Industrial Groups' to operate in unions. Ostensibly

propaganda units for the ALP, the Groups in fact worked closely with the Movement\textsuperscript{17} against communists and their allies. They worked zealously if, as this and the final chapter show, somewhat indiscriminately. In 1946 the Groups won the endorsement of the ALP in South Australia and Victoria. Groups could now be set up in individual unions.

This onslaught was only one element in the decline of communism after the War. The CPA attempted to seize the initiative for change, declaring itself the working-class party in Australia. This period of so-called 'adventurism' featured a mounting barrage of criticisms of the Chifley Government. It culminated in the coal industry where the CPA was well organised. After a long strike in 1949, the miners were defeated and the CPA isolated. The resolution of the rise of the Groups and the decline of the CPA was the ACTU's endorsement of a Labor Government's use of troops in the mines and the wide acceptance of 'Court-controlled ballots'. Anti-communists now advanced: the FIA fell to the Groupers as did the Clerks in Queensland and the Railways Union in Victoria. Even the Miners rejected their CPA leaders. The left's gains were thus withering away. The Labor Party fared no better. It was defeated in a Federal election in 1949 and there now seemed no hope that social reconstruction would take place.

For women workers, there were similar changes after the War. The

\textsuperscript{17} This is no new claim. Santamaria himself wrote that the Movement 'could not have fought ... without that open form of the Industrial Groups'. Quoted in F.G. Clarke, 'Labour and the Catholic Social Studies Movement', \textit{Labour History}, No.20, May 1971.
pressures upon women were promptly reversed in 1945. In general, women were 'demobbed' from industry as men were from the armed forces. By 1946-47 the number of women in the metal trades had been halved as a return to pre-war conditions was undertaken. Rehabilitation schemes for ex-servicemen included concerns about job security which no workers had ever known and which women, now, certainly lacked. At least in the short-term, it seemed that the question of what work women could do was overtaken by questions about what they should do.

The impact of the War upon women's wages was no clearer. Minimum rates ranged from 54 to 90 per cent of men's with a few on equal pay. Future advance seemed hazardous. The re-structuring of the arbitration system in 1947 set up less legalistic processes under Conciliation Commissioners. However, Commissioners could not deal with Basic Wage cases. These needed the attention of the full Court. The High Court ruled in 1949 that women on the 90 per cent rate should come back to 75 per cent and the Arbitration Court set 75 per cent as the female rate. The family wage remained intact; the female breadwinner, invisible. Although these decisions emphasised the transience of some of women's War-time gains, there were changes in

19. A. Summers' telling phrase; op.cit., p.419.
women's work and pay in the 1940s. The clothing trade was the immediate context for them for many women.

II

The nature of the demand for clothing in the War was different from anything before because of the level of planning and the emphasis upon military needs. Where the First World War brought dislocation and unemployment, World War Two brought intense demand and, from 1941/42, planning of production and selling. Even rationing did not cause unemployment. There was some unevenness in the military work given to each State\(^\text{23}\) but the general pattern of the war years was one of labour shortages. This continued well after the War.

Table 1: Employment in the Main States\(^\text{24}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ready-made and</td>
<td>8240</td>
<td>8096</td>
<td>10,642</td>
<td>12,051</td>
<td>13,984</td>
<td>18,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailoring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dressmaking and</td>
<td>9636</td>
<td>9448</td>
<td>13,363</td>
<td>3377</td>
<td>2746</td>
<td>4360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millinery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirts etc</td>
<td>6285</td>
<td>4527</td>
<td>6586</td>
<td>6195</td>
<td>6115</td>
<td>7998</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: VYB, NSWSR.

\(^{23}\) This caused some discussion in the Union but it is difficult to be sure about the way in which the pattern developed. From membership and financial records, it seems that the NSW Branch prospered most. This would hardly be surprising because it was already the main centre for the menswear trade.

\(^{24}\) Note: these totals are calculated from smaller groupings in VYB and NSWSR.
Table 2: Employment in South Australia and Queensland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>QUEENSLAND</th>
<th>SOUTH AUSTRALIA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ready-made and Tailoring</td>
<td>3026 2672 3196</td>
<td>1829 1720 2688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dressmaking and Millinery</td>
<td>1333 1070 1817</td>
<td>1216 1035 1410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirts etc.</td>
<td>908 943 1166</td>
<td>578 566 517</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CYB No.33, 1940; No.36, 1944/45.

The composition of the work-force changed during the War. Then, and afterwards, long-term patterns which had been slightly disrupted in the 1930s were confirmed. NSW came to employ more workers in ready-made and tailoring work than the other States combined and it employed more workers, overall, than did Victoria. On the other hand, Victoria remained clearly the 'woman's wear' centre. Different structural bases for unionism therefore continued as the industry grew. The smaller States fared less well in the War and there were complaints that they were not receiving their fair share of military work.

As NSW overhauled the Victorian dominance of the industry, there were

25. Note that figures for 1944/45 are not readily available and are not used in this table.

26. SA Branch, Minutes, 10 February 1941.
important changes in the sexual division of the work force. The female proportion of the ready-made and tailoring section rose from 82.5 per cent in 1939 to 86.3 per cent by the War's end. The female percentages in Victoria had been in decline in the 1930s. They now increased - from 76.3 to 79.9. In the other sections of the industry, women's participation also increased. It should be emphasised that, as the tables show, employment fell in all but one of the sections of the trade during the War. That is to say, the role of women may well have seemed even more striking because their presence increased in a declining trade. Indeed in the Victorian tailoring and ready-made section, the total number of women employed actually increased, peaking at 6907 in 1941/42 and 79.5 per cent. Still this did not satisfy the requirements of either civilian or military planning. Potentially, labour shortages placed some women and the Union in a strong position.

The effect of the increase in female employment is by no means clear. There is some suggestion that the number of women pressers increased but the major changes arose because of the emphasis on military work and the blurring of distinctions between the work of tailors and tailoresses. That more women were employed and that work patterns could change during the War was hardly unusual. What was surprising -

27. The highest proportion in Victoria was 80.4 per cent in 1942/43 but the total number of women employed was less than in 1941/42.

28. Women as 'machine-pressers' attracted the attention of Federal Council. See below, 'Arbitration'. Wallis also claimed many women were employed as pressers and cutters. See Correspondence, A.R. Wallis to E.J. Holloway, 26 February 1944; ANU, El38/18/62.
and most important for the nature of the Union - was the change after the War.

First, the general rise in clothing trades' employment should be noted. In the main States this rise was about 38 per cent from 1944/45 to 1949/50; NSW tailoring rose by over 57 per cent, Victoria's dressmaking by nearly 39.29 Second, the sexual division of this development needs to be discussed, for, in every section in those States, the proportion of women declined. This might not be unexpected given the pressures upon women to return to the home but, as is set out in Table 3, the percentages fell below the pre-War levels (and, indeed, below those obtaining through the 1930s).

Table 3: Women as a Percentage of Total Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>VICTORIA</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>NEW SOUTH WALES</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ready-made and</td>
<td>76.3</td>
<td>79.9</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td>86.3</td>
<td>82.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailoring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dressmaking and</td>
<td>92.3</td>
<td>92.7</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>94.1</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>90.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millinery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirts etc</td>
<td>89.6</td>
<td>91.3</td>
<td>87.1</td>
<td>91.6</td>
<td>91.8</td>
<td>88.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Calculated from VYB, NSWSR.

29. Calculated from NSWSR and VYB.
Only in the expanding NSW tailoring and ready-made trade did the proportion of women not fall considerably during the 1940s. The NSW trend was a follow-through of the patterns of change seen since the 1920s. What is unusual is the pattern in other sections, especially the fall in the proportion of women employed in Victoria. There, employers insisted that female labour was as scarce as during the War. Union officials believed that an 'exodus' of women was taking place.30 Perhaps, then, post-War employment levels partly reflected lower, female, participation rates. It may have been the case that the Government's Rehabilitation Schemes and preference for ex-Servicemen drove women from the trade. In trying to explain the Victorian experience the impact of 'Rehabilitation' was more significant than in NSW. In 1946, the Victorian Branch Secretary drew attention to the creation of the job of 'male machinists ... a new experience for .. the Clothing Industry'.31 The wages of many of these men were subsidised by the state. It is, therefore, likely that some employers' patriotism was quickened by this and that, in this way, women may have been driven out. In short, we may suggest that long-term patterns of development continued in NSW but that, in Victoria where the proportions of women had, apparently, peaked in the 1920s, short-term determinants were more important.

In all parts of the industry, the 1940s was a decade of stability and a propitious one for women to demand improvements. Underlying this


31. ibid.
was the guaranteed market which continued secure through the labour shortages of the late 1940s. Not until 1949 did some members of the Union again become anxious about imports.32

The volume and make-up of employment had been uneven through and after the war but no unemployment had troubled the Union. Employers were as secure behind the protectionism of war as were workers. In both war and peace there were significant, indeed unparalleled, advances in output and productivity.

Table 4: Value of Output, at 1938/39 prices (£000)33

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>New South Wales</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>New South Wales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1938/39</td>
<td>3701</td>
<td>4239</td>
<td>6957</td>
<td>12062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944/45</td>
<td>4844</td>
<td>7747</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>2133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949/50</td>
<td>7579</td>
<td>1022</td>
<td>6616</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Calculated from VYB, NSWSR.

32. FC Minutes, 5 May 1949; Vic Branch, Minutes, 5, 12 September, 7 November 1949.
33. Prices adjusted by retail price index.
The impressive aspect of these statistics is the increase in output during the War - that is, as employment fell. The only exception was NSW ready-made and tailoring trade where employment rose by 16 per cent. Output, however, rose by over 64 per cent. Similarly, in Victoria's 'war industry', the ready-made section: employment fell 1.7 per cent, output rose by nearly 31 per cent. These increases were remarkable because the actual physical labour of much of the work was very hard. Khaki cloth was hard to work and many military garments were more bulky and heavy than civilian ones. These difficulties were exacerbated by the quality of some material.

Increases in output were secured not least through a longer working-day. Sometimes women worked up to 52 hours weekly. Many women, like other workers, accepted the need to work longer and harder and to respond 'patriotically' to the War. However, the changes which had been made in the industry in the late-1930s continued. These are the most important, underlying, explanations of rising output.

Over the whole of the 1930s, the value of plant and machinery advanced by about 20 per cent. In ready-made and tailoring in NSW it increased by almost 78 per cent in the War, in Victoria by almost 39 per cent.

34. ibid.; again, output at constant prices.
35. Interviews, L. Brewer, K. Collins.
36. FC, Minutes, 12 April 1943.
37. Vic Branch, Minutes, 23 November 1942; changes in holiday leave were also volunteered: FC, Federal Secretary's Report, 1942, 1943.
38. Calculated from NSWSR and VYB and at constant prices.
The application of horse-power continued its increase.\textsuperscript{39} For women workers, then, the trade became more capitalised and mechanised. As the presence of women grew so, in these years, did productivity. With their traditionally low margins for skill women were, more than ever, an essential component of a manufacturing boom.

After the War, capital provided even more ground for growth. The value of plant and machinery increased more quickly than during 1939-45. For employers, the protected market of the late 1940s and the booming, pent-up, demand for clothing were even greater spurs for mechanisation than military needs had been. In the NSW ready-made and tailoring and the Victorian shirt trades, the value of plant and machinery doubled in just five years, 1944/45 to 1949/50. In NSW's dressmaking it increased by 182 per cent. Output correspondingly grew. In all sections it advanced more quickly than during the War. Substantial increases in employment now aided this development but, as in the War, output advanced far more quickly than did employment.\textsuperscript{40}

We may see this period as the single most striking in terms of increase in output and machinery. Within this development there were some contradictions: after advancing in the 1930s, the average size of firms declined. The working proprietor - a declining force in the '30s - became somewhat more important. In this changing and expanding

\textsuperscript{39. Calculated, ibid.}
\textsuperscript{40. ibid.}
trade, however, the lot of most workers was not allevi ated by hopes of ownership. Earnings did not allow women to rise in this way. Wages received by clothing workers are a central element of this chapter. Here we may merely say that, as always, methods of payment were often in dispute as employers sought every possible way to compete with each other. Differences between workers' type of task, method of payment and between the traditions of each Branch of their Union remained important in an apparently more homogeneous industry.

(ii) GROWTH, STRUCTURE AND POLICY

Many of the structural and policy developments of the Union need to be understood in terms of union growth in the 1940s the impact of economic regulation and prosperity. The growth of the union presented problems. In the 1930s the ACATU had grown by about 73 per cent. In the 1940s membership grew by 87.5 per cent to more than 60 000 in 1949. Union coverage of the industry rose from the 60 per cent rate of the late 1930s to about 80 per cent. The number of financial members may be fairly comprehensively tallied.

41. There is a paucity of material from the NSW Branch for these years: no journals, few reports or letters and only incomplete Minutes. There are no extant Minutes May 1939-June 1943 and April 1949-May 1950. For Queensland the problem is worse: apart from a few months in 1944, no Minutes have survived for the period May 1939-September 1954. The footnotes, below, indicate when those gaps are important in confining the scope of the account.

42. On the basis of Victorian statistics, which are the best available, total membership can be guessed at for 1949 - 60 615.
Table 5: Union Growth and Female Membership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Financial</th>
<th>Percentage Female (of financial total)</th>
<th>Income from Contributions</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>32 329</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>£</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>38 436</td>
<td>22 546</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>22 559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>44 467</td>
<td>25 740</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>24 532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>47 636</td>
<td>27 781</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>27 143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>43 099</td>
<td>30 006</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>27 993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>42 867</td>
<td>31 822</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>30 171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>47 921</td>
<td>33 760</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>32 336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>35 549</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>34 452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>42 082</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>42 033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>43 037</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: FC, Federal Secretary's Reports, 1940-50.

Union officials emphasised the importance of the Outwork Award in union growth. The extraordinary growth rate of 1939-42 was testament to this and to the high coverage achieved over military work. The Award's requirement that sub-contractors' employees be financial members of the Union eased the long-standing problem of unpaid dues. The ratio of financial to total membership rose from its norm, of

43. The percentage of women is calculated therefrom. Until the 1940s officials usually spoke of 'total' membership. Thereafter 'financial' or 'effective' were more commonly used. Although no indication is given, income probably at constant prices.
about 55 per cent to almost 75 per cent. The more prescient officials were concerned about what would happen to the Union's size and strength when the War ended. Post-war prosperity limited this concern to a mere anxiety at the slight decline in the proportion of members who were financial from 75 to 71 per cent overall.

Expansion was not merely a product of the 'trade cycle', or even the peculiarities of war. The Victorian Branch sought the co-operation of some firms in union recognition and enforced 'the union shop' upon others. Early in the War it tried to improve coverage of tie-work, millinery and the _bete noir_ of unionism, the shirt trade. It was most successful in the dressmaking trade where, by early 1942, 87 per cent of workers were unionists. As a Federation, the most obvious way to expand both size and resources was amalgamation. In the 1940s there were increasingly sound industrial reasons for such a policy as the marketing of more knitted clothes and similar changes blurred traditional 'demarcation' lines. However, negotiations with the ATWU and the Felt Hatters' were fruitless - as were moves (for the second time) by South Australia to organise in textile mills.

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44. In 1942, 492 out of 596 factories in Melbourne were organised under the Contract or Military clauses. Vic Branch, Secretary's Report, 1940, 1943, 1945, 1946.

45. Vic Branch, Minutes, 4 March, 24 June, 9 September, 7 October 1940; 17 February, 3, 31 March, 21 April, 19 May, 18 August, 1, 15 September 1941; 13 April 1942.

46. Vic Branch, Addendum to Correspondence, 3 March 1942; ANU, E138/18/67.

47. SA Branch, Minutes, 19 November 1945.
Geographical growth was especially important. In Victoria, 'country' members' contributions grew from £40 in 1940 to £995 in 1945. In the next two years, country membership rose from nine to 15 per cent of the Branch total. Similarly, in NSW, officials began to pay some attention to the needs of the Wollongong area and other, more isolated, country regions. The most important change was the addition of a Branch in Western Australia in 1947, bringing nearly 1400 paid-up members into the Union.

The nature of the Union's growth was as important, in several ways, as its volume. In 1941, both Queensland and South Australia recorded financial membership in excess of 2500. They were thereby entitled to send three delegates each to Federal Council - the same number as the Victorian and NSW Branches. By the War's end, the two bigger Branches had between them 84 per cent of the Union's members and, still, the same number of delegates each to Council as Queensland and South Australia. There was though, little sign of a common interest between Victoria and NSW. In 1944 NSW became, again, the largest Branch, a fact which of itself exacerbated rivalry between it and Victoria.

Changes in male:female ratios in the Union were an element of growth with perplexing implications. In the smaller Branches, the ratio

49. NSW Branch, Minutes, 3 September 1945; 15 January 1947.
51. Branch sizes and delegates from FC, Federal Secretary's Report; Minutes.
varied little over the decade. In Victoria with dressmaking being
given added attention, the proportion of members who were women rose
from 88 to 91 per cent by 1942 and to 93 per cent as the proportion of
women employed in all sections increased. The figure in NSW where, it
will be recalled, the participation of women in the trade was greater
than Victoria's, reached 92 per cent in 1944. That this reflected
secular trends as much as war-time exigency is suggested by the
maintenance of a similar rate, 91 per cent to 1949. In Victoria, the
proportion fell to 87 per cent - which was below the level for 1940.
This might well have merely reflected the ratios in the industry but
it was unusual because the Branch had always enrolled a higher
proportion of women than the industry employed. Both main Branches,
then, were developing in ways in contrast to their traditions.
Overall, the proportion of women in the Union still rose.

There were also peculiarities in comparison with other unions.
Employment in metals and munitions, doubled in the War (largely
through recruiting women) and declined thereafter. FIA membership
rose from 20,500 in 1939 to 62,000 in 1944, before declining to
40,000. The AEU took on members as more than 37,000 'dilutees'
entered the trade but membership declined after the War. By
contrast, the ACATU grew throughout the decade. In doing so, the
Union itself became as divisive a concern as the War. 'Structural
responses' to the different facets of growth might now be examined.

52. R. Murray and K. White, op.cit., pp.110, 117, 122; T. Sheridan,
op.cit., pp.156, 161.
Maintaining participation and democracy became more difficult as the Union grew. In 1946, Wallis expressed some concern about the rights of country members, whose activities as unionists were hampered by the lack of sub-Branches.\textsuperscript{53} This clashed with the view of the NSW officials whose energy was being spent trying to dampen enthusiasm for a sub-Branch in Wollongong. At Council in 1947, Fallon argued, not a little disingenuously, that country members 'might not be aware of all the circumstances surrounding [a] proposition'.

NSW delegates moved that the base for a sub-Branch should be 1500 members as against the 1000 mark then operating. Wallis argued that this would make the formation of sub-branches almost impossible. No doubt for that very reason the NSW motion was carried.\textsuperscript{54}

There were no major structural changes within the Branches, nor demands for them. However, after the stability of the 1930s, this decade saw considerable changes in the Union's personnel, particularly in Victoria. This was partly because growth necessitated an increase in organisers. Victoria had three in the field in 1939; by 1950 there were seven. NSW then had five, but the 'Old Guard' remained intact with Organisers Murphy and Gibb in the posts they had held since 1917. In Victoria only two Organisers, George Corry and Fred Bradley, had been in office for over four years. The clearest break with the past was Wallis' retirement in 1947. He was the last of the

\textsuperscript{53} Vic Branch, Secretary's Report, 1946, p.5.

\textsuperscript{54} FC, Minutes, 17 April 1947. Two years later, that position was confirmed, without debate; ibid., 24 April 1949.
'VSP generation' of officials and had held office since 1912. Callard had become Federal Secretary andOrganiser William Smith had been dismissed for embezzling union funds. In another sense, amidst all the changes, Victoria showed the greatest continuity. Ted Smith, an ALP militant, succeeded Wallis. A former Clerks'Union radical and NSW Socialisation Unit officer, D.R. (Don) MacSween, became an organiser.55

Neither structure nor politics changed very much in Queensland, despite challenges, while in South Australia, the 'official' staff remained at just two males - although a clerk, Miss Caraher, was awarded the status of 'Industrial Officer' in 1943.56 Similarly, in the post-War years, a new clerk, Muriel Spencer, found herself 'called upon to assist in ... organising' for the Branch.57 Despite changes at the Union's base, in no Branch did the role accorded to women change apart from these kind of ad hoc arrangements. Structural changes did not help. South Australia's committee was re-organised in 1941 but not all the subsequently available positions were filled. Only in the late 1940s did the committee genuinely expand. Even then, the proportion of women on the committee declined from three out of

55. Wallis became a Conciliation Commissioner under the re-vamped Act. Smith's sacking is reported in Vic Branch, Minutes, 2 August 1946. He had been an organiser since 1927; Ted Smith since 1924. MacSween, a future Branch Secretary with a high profile in the ALP-left, was appointed on 16 September 1946.

56. SA Branch, Minutes, 8 April 1943.

57. Voice of the Clothing Trades' Union, Spring 1947. Muriel Spencer (subsequently Dosa, then Collins) became a full-time organiser in 1951 and Secretary on 21 June 1954. See Chapter Nine.
seven in 1939 to four out of thirteen in 1949. In Victoria and NSW there was a slight increase in the numbers of women but, in both Branches, the structure of the committee - a hybrid of craft and industry - guaranteed over-representation to the former. When industry sections' representation was changed, craft divisions could still surface. Thus, for a time, there were two delegates for dressmaking of whom one was categorised a 'dressmaker's cutter'. South Australia went further, providing for two cutters in menswear - one for order-work and one for stock. Some Branches, especially Victoria, attempted to increase the representation of 'women's sections' but men remained dominant because the committee structure institutionalised craft status.58

The major impact of the war was on the work of Federal Council. It was very stable in terms of personnel.59 This was scarcely surprising in view of the stability of the Branches and the constraints upon women's activities. What did change was Council's role. From April 1940 to April 1950 Federal delegates met on 24 occasions compared with only 12 in the 1930s. Of these 24 meetings no less than 17 were held during the War.60 The Union became somewhat more centralised but

58. For the South Australian change, see SA Branch, Minutes, 13 December 1948. The easiest way in which to follow these changes is through annual elections as recorded in Branch Minutes, December-January.

59. Representatives from the two main Branches were, exclusively, officials. See FC, Minutes, passim.

60. These meetings were of Council or Management Committee. In the 1930s a few formal Management Committee meetings took place to clear unfinancial Branches for attendance. These are excluded from the comparison.
there was no formal change in the status of either Council or the Federal Secretary. Wallis still attended Council as a Victorian delegate, despite the post's being designated a full-time one in 1941.61 Branch parochialism was instanced when South Australia promptly demanded that a full-time Federal Secretary not have voting rights.62 Contradictions were heightened because Wallis and, to some extent, Federal President Fallon were more independent of Council (and the Branches) than other officials had ever been. They became closely entangled with the state - drawing upon their association with the union movement to meet Labor Government Ministers and drawing upon the Union's 'arbitration tradition' to meet Court officials. Wallis even had secret discussions with the latter, refusing to reveal details to Council. He was also busy with the Women's Employment Board.

As Federal Council's role expanded, then, Wallis became at once freer of Union constraint and more involved with the state and employers. At the same time, he was beginning more and more to feel frustrated with the Union's loose structure and parochial traditions.63 He came increasingly to talk like his predecessor, Herbert Carter, of these problems and to find himself feuding with Branch officials. In 1944 he resigned as Federal Secretary and returned to the Victorian Branch. He complained that the Branches did not advise the Federal

61. FC, Minutes, 8, 9 April 1941. Wallis had actually been 'full-time' since 1939.

62. SA Branch, Minutes, 23 June 1941.

63. Wallis' exasperation had been growing since the 1930s. There are numerous instances; see especially FC, Minutes, 22 April 1940.
office of their activities and the 'very little information [was] made available' to the Federal Secretary.64

The impact of his resignation was at first unclear. The abolition of Federal Management Committee was the apparent structural resolution, with Fallon and Callard urging that Council carry out the whole of Federal business. Minor functions could be left to the Federal President and Secretary.65 This outcome could be read in different ways. It might mean closer control of the Union by Branches - limiting the initiative of the Federation through their Council delegates. Relationships between Federal Secretary and Council itself would depend upon just which functions were left aside by Council and how often Council met. What happened was that 'Special' Federal Councils were called in addition to the annual meeting in 1944 and 1946; then in 1951, 1953 and 1956. In other years, Council only met annually.

That a union's 'peak' council should meet only once a year is by no means uncommon. What was important was the nature of the relationship between the ACATU's parts. Regardless of other changes, Federal officers were still constrained by financial considerations. In 1944 when, for the first time, NSW was keen to increase Branch capitation

64. FC, Federal Secretary's Report, 1944, p.3. Wallis added that, after posting his resignation, 'like most other letters receipt of same was not acknowledged'. Personal factors were not unimportant; Wallis was ill and weak after Council feuds and Court proceedings. Interviews, L. Brewer, E. Austin.

65. FC, Minutes, 26 April 1944.
to Council, the Victorians refused to agree, not least because savings were expected from the disbanding of Management Committee. In 1946 capitation was raised from 10 to 12½ per cent of Branch income. NSW delegates and new Federal Secretary Callard had wanted it to be at 20 per cent. That Callard—who sat at Council as Federal Secretary—was both formally and personally independent of the Victorian Branch explains that Branch adopting an unusual attitude.

In addition, each Branch had differing financial concerns. Victorian officers wanted membership fees increased but had difficulty in convincing Federal Council in 1947. As a compromise, Council resolved that, within a set range, Branches could set their own rates. Victoria's stance was not merely in reaction to increased capitation. Wallis had warned of the impact of losing 'compulsory members' when war work ended and of the costs of running a decent journal and expanding union business. Nevertheless, the Victorian Branch Executive did not increase the fees until 1949. In NSW, there were attempts from some members and officers to establish mortality funds. This Branch had as much investment as the others combined but Fallon

66. ibid.; Vic. Branch, Minutes, 11, 17, 18 September 1944. The Branches endorsed the abolition of Management Committee but rejected the increased capitation; SFC, Minutes, 17 October 1944.

67. FC, Minutes, 4-9 April 1946. For Callard and Wallis' relationship, interviews, E. Austin. At this meeting the Union's name was changed to Clothing and Allied Trades' Union (CATU). For simplicity, I have used the new name only from 1947.

68. FC, Minutes, 18 April 1947.

69. Vic Branch, Minutes, 13 April 1949. Their recommendation was carried, narrowly defeating opposition from the 'Groupers'—for which see below. For Wallis' earlier concerns see 8 July 1946, 24 March 1947; Secretary's Report, 1945, p.1; 1948, p.1.
opposed such schemes on actuarial grounds, but there was no thoroughgoing analysis of their possibilities. Thus, within NSW, the Union's activities remained confined to their traditional field, just as, nationally, the structure remained constrained by long-standing Branch introversion.

The national structure was affected by growth as much as by war. Victorian delegates believed that, at Council, the smaller Branches were over-represented. (This may add to an explanation of the Victorian unwillingness to support capitation increases.) Rather than re-arrange the existing system of proportional representation, Council in 1949 decided to set a fixed number of delegates to which each Branch would be entitled. The two smaller Branches would still have three delegates; the larger Branches, four. In addition, the Federal Secretary would, once more, have a seat 'by virtue of office'.

By 1949, then, the Union again had a genuinely full-time Federal Secretary. Since 1946 he had had a research officer who was designated Assistant Federal Secretary. When Council met in April

70. NSW Branch, Minutes, 6 September, 29 November, 6 December 1943; 7 February 1944; 6, 13 December 1948; FC, Minutes, 27 April 1949. The NSW Branch claimed to have doubled in size in the War. By 1949 it had almost £50 000 invested (calculated from FC, Federal Secretary's Report, 1950, p.7).

71. FC, Minutes, 4-9 April 1949. (Western Australia had one delegate when it joined.) Wallis never sat as Federal Secretary after 1937. The Victorians did not oppose Callard's doing so, perhaps indicating that they thought that he did not represent the Branch's view.

72. Vic Branch, Minutes, 21 January 1946 for his appointment. Earlier he had worked for the Victorian Branch; FC, Minutes, 18 April 1947 for his becoming Assistant Secretary.
1950 an extortion scheme had been uncovered in the Federal office. Callard stood down and no full-time replacement was immediately mooted. In peace and prosperity the role of Federal Secretary and the authority of Council seemed as tenuous as in depression or war.

Nevertheless, for at least some of this time the Union had been becoming a more united organistaion. How, in this context, workers and their officials responded to the conditions of war and then peace-time growth may now be examined. Council's enhanced role did not restrain members' challenges to some recommendations from their Branch Executives or the spontaneity of direct action. Nor, at first, did the War. In Victoria, there were four main stoppages from the declaration of war to the invasion of the Soviet Union; and another four in the following five months. There were, though, none from the advent of the Labor Government and the Japanese entry into the War until the end of 1943. Early in 1944 there were several stoppages.

At first, strikes were about familiar issues like tasks and speed-up, with Acting-Secretary Callard urging prompt 'job action' to secure 'war increases'. Conflicts over military needs soon became

73. FC, Minutes, 18, 19, 24 April 1950. Interviews, K. Collins, M. Collins.

74. The problems with union sources for this chapter are most acute when considering rank-and-file response. The Branch Minutes for NSW and Queensland are incomplete; for South Australia, very terse. What follows, then, is based on Victoria. The summary of strike activity is taken from the Branch Minutes.

75. Vic Branch, Secretary's Report, 1940, pp.6, 7; Minutes, 20 May 1940 (Callard). For disputes see 8 July, 7, 17, 28 October 1940; 20 January 1941.
apparent. There was a strike in a Melbourne factory in October 1940 and members in Sydney were calling for stop-work meetings, to discuss 'war loadings', by August 1941. Victorian members found themselves in conflict not only with their employers but with officials. Even after the Soviet Union entered the War, members agreed with the Branch's leading communist, Gus Haddon, that no loans should be made to the 'anti-working class' Menzies Government because

offering financial assistance to this Government to assist the Soviet would be like sending money to a friend through his worst enemy.

Wallis' stirring call to support all Allied Governments was defeated.77

Members' shop-floor conduct was finally applauded by the Branch Executive in November 1941, when women at two firms took prompt action over tasks and over-time.78 Japan's entry in December brought changes. The Victorian Executive moved that a War loan be made available and that holidays be set aside if necessary. Members queried these policies but finally adopted them at the final General Meeting of 1941.79 In the following two years members were supportive of the War effort - as were male workers. A record amount of coal was

76. Vic Branch, Minutes, 4 November 1940; 13 October 1941; MC, Minutes, 15 September 1941.
77. Vic Branch, Minutes, 30 June 1941.
78. ibid., 10, 17 November 1941.
79. ibid., 10, 15 December 1941. The holiday decision irked NSW officials who feared employers encouraging workers to stay away and miss holiday pay. See MC, Minutes, 9, 10 January 1942.
raised in 1942, other unionists accepted the usually intolerable and the FIA's communist leadership demanded the 'utmost discipline' of members. Similarly, the *Australian Clothing Trades* Journal urged that 'each one of us must give every ounce of energy to his or her task'.

In his 'Report' for 1942, Wallis warned that 'far more drastic changes' in industrial life would be necessary to defeat Fascism. He also insisted that by actively supporting the War effort, the Union would have 'a strong claim ... for fair and just treatment of the members'. This hope underpinned the support many unionists gave to the War. In clothing, if the strike pattern is broadly similar to other trades, members did not entirely co-operate. Other forms of action were probably retained. Women workers still came into conflict over tasks and work processes, whereas cutters and pressers were less conspicuous. Women were to the fore in disputes at the Commonwealth Government Clothing Factory - and both men and women argued with their leaders over shop committees.

By the spring of 1942 some women at the CGCF were working up to 52 hours weekly in conditions which they considered were unacceptable.

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81. *ACTJ*, November 1942.

82. FC, Federal Secretary's Report, 1942, p.11.

83. Vic Branch, Minutes, 14 October 1940 for the first recorded CGCF dispute of the War.
After meeting to demand wage increases the women had to wait some time, but increases were paid - despite 'wage-pegging' - in March 1943. Action also arose from dissatisfaction with task rates. After some reluctance to do so, management met the Union's representatives. Earlier, the Journal had reported how much easier things were for the Union than during 'the last war'. Relations were indeed much better and the Union's acceptance was exemplified after the War when the Branch intervened, albeit with great difficulty, in the process of the appointment of a new manager. During the War, the lack of explicit conflict may well have been due to the relatively strong bargaining position of women workers. Thus at one major firm in 1943, in a task-dispute, the officers simply advised the women to turn the system to their advantage by allowing 'a decent margin' when themselves working out tasks.

The difficulties of reconciling union practice and war needs was perhaps most clear in relation to shop committees. Gus Haddon led demands for their introduction. After long and convoluted debate, the Branch agreed to this in May 1942, with Callard's proviso that they not be 'mere production committees'. In the following year internal tensions became greater and a special sub-committee emphasised the

84. ibid., 9, 16, 23 November 1942; 23 March, 6, 20 September 1943.
85. ACTJ, November 1941.
86. Vic Branch, Minutes, 21 January, 11 March, 13 May, 3 June, 15, 29 July, 19 August 1946; 8 April, 24 December 1947. The intervention was no easy matter. The Branch went so far as to threaten to withhold its ALP affiliation fees.
87. ibid., 21 June 1943.
problems of women workers' welfare. Officials were instructed to pursue questions of leave and of Award anomalies. In December 1943, Haddon finally succeeded in establishing 'shock committees' to demand redress for grievances and to boost production.88

Throughout this saga there were contradictions within the 'war policy'. These make clearer the response of women workers. As early as February 1943, the Victorians had decided that the existing work-force was doing more than enough work. Any further increase in hours was opposed because workers were already 'working at top speed', because factories were small and unhygienic and because absenteeism would increase.89 When, later in the year, women's wages were greatly increased to try to attract more labour, there was no unwillingness in Victorian factories to stop work if all the increases were not paid. When women in nine major factories stopped work, officials' response encapsulated the historical contradictions in their beliefs about industrial action.

Officials warned that the Arbitration Act limited the public support they could give,90 but, after the strikes, they sent letters to all

88. These issues were discussed frequently and at great length. See most meetings March-May 1942, 16 August 1943 and November-December 1943. Haddon's scheme overturned an Executive proposal for employer-employee committees to deal with the causes of absenteeism and resolve grievances. Compare the presentation of the ideas at meetings of 1 and 13 December.

89. ibid., 8 February 1943.

90. Vic Branch, Secretary's Report, April 1944, pp.6, 7. For the dispute itself, Minutes, February, March 1944. For the Award see 'Arbitration', below.
the strikers claiming that the Victorian Branch's action had 'carried' the whole Union.91 Many of the women went further, securing increases beyond those won officially. An 'official' response was published in the Journal in April 1944, by which time the spirit of war-time co-operation was running low. The Journal reiterated officials' belated praise and reported on the nature and impact of the strikes.

From these reports there emerges a sense of directness and energy mirroring the Adelaide strike of 1922 and the Melbourne stoppages in 1932 and 1935. One 'girl' was quoted as being typical of the strikers. 'We just went out, the boss nearly had a fit. By gee, it was good'.92 From this kind of enthusiasm new structures could emerge. The paper noted that, at one factory, 'the girls organised their first meeting'.93 If this kind of spontaneous action had precedents in Victoria, so did the abrupt return to 'arbitration unionism' and so did the stability of union structure in the face of changes in women's militancy. Although Victoria was usually the only Branch where major strikes took place, it was not different in kind from the Branches concentrating more heavily upon arbitration and the craft interest.

As the end of the War drew closer, Victorian members sought redress for grievances in private factories and at the CGCF. Men, with

91. Vic Branch, Minutes, 20 March 1944.
92. ACTJ, April 1944. The articles were written by a newly-recruited research officer, Walter Hood.
93. ibid.
pressers leading, became more active through 1945. In the smaller Branches, endemic conflicts were recorded as members resisted 'time-card' systems and speed-up. In NSW when members listed their main concerns the familiar theme of control underpinned them: outwork, improvers not being properly taught and the need for effective shop committees. Melbourne's cutters and pressers or, as the Minute described them, 'the skilled section', saw the Union's revival in terms of unchanged craft exclusivism, through re-instating the full regulation of apprenticeship, banning males over eighteen from entering the trade and, by implication, continuing to bar women. In several ways, then, the War's longer-term impact could be seen as minimal.

In peace-time, members were more inclined to acquiesce in everything that their employers or Union leaders wanted. The Victorian Executive's power of appointment was challenged and Haddon and new organiser MacSween opposed the notion of senior officials that individual members of the Executive should be bound by majority decisions when putting issues at general meetings. Members abruptly rejected rules designed to punish 'slander' of the Union. Despite

94. Vic Branch, Minutes, 6-27 November 1944; 19 February, 16, 19 March, 13 August, 3 September 1945.
95. SA Branch, Minutes, 10 January 1944; Qld Branch, Minutes, 12 May 1944.
96. NSW Branch, Minutes, 8 October 1945.
97. Vic Branch, Minutes, 23 February 1945.
98. ibid., 11, 17 March, 28 April, 25 May 1948.
99. ibid., 23 February 1948. MacSween led the opposition to this recommendation from Federal Council.
these explicit conflicts, the general tendency in both Victoria and NSW was towards a more formalised and business-like approach in meetings, with fewer opportunities for opposing Executive recommendations. Executives also secured greater control of disputes. In Victoria, an apparent shortage of female labour helped members secure some demands without much trouble; and, in 1946 and 1948, disputes about wages were handled without much central direction. However, when disputes over piece-rates' adjustments broke out, the Executive was quick to point to the number of firms which had conceded workers' demands after negotiation. This, it declared, was preferable to direct action.

In NSW, 'official' wariness of strike action was even clearer. In January 1947, when women in a major factory struck over general conditions, they found little support. The pressers stayed in; the officials stayed away. At the end of the month, after organisers had intervened, the women returned to work on the old terms. In 1949, when women opposed a timing system at David Jones, officials vacillated between choosing the Court or a Board of Reference for redress. Secretary Fallon steered subsequent Federal Council

100. This analysis is necessarily somewhat subjective and should not be thought of as a 'trend' - as Chapter Nine will show.


102. Vic Branch, Minutes, 23 February, 19 April 1948.

103. NSW Branch, Minutes, 14, 20 January 1947.
discussions of the dispute away from direct action. The War had seen unusual degrees of co-operation in a changing industry. In the prosperous conditions of the late-1940s members were frequently keen to defend piece-scales and oppose new methods but at neither the shop-floor nor the Union meeting was there the broader concern with those changes that there had been in the late-1930s.

The officers' definitions and defence of their members' interests seemed, then, to be changing over the decade. During the War, the Union's officers became closely involved with a number of Government ministries. Initially, there was little to show for their endeavours. Nor was there much change in attitude in the Union. When Federal Council met in April 1940, it endorsed action taken by Wallis to oppose the introduction of shift-work at the CGCF. Wallis had told management that the Union would guarantee sufficient labour for military work. How this was to be done was not revealed but the gesture showed a willingness to co-operate.

Council's earliest 'war demands' were based on notions of control, to be secured through the state. The Ministry of Supply should ensure that the 'Outwork Award' was enforced and that all military garments be made under the aegis of the sub-contract clauses, that is, with

104. ibid., 28 February, 28 March 1949; FC, Minutes, 2, 3 May 1949. The dispute went to Commissioner Findlay. See 64 CAR 240.

105. FC, Minutes, 15 April 1940.

106. FC, Federal Secretary's Report, 1941, p.11. There is no evidence here of the concerns which motivated the ATWU's opposition to shifts - 'the displacement of male labour'; see E. Ryan and A. Conlon, op.cit., p.123.
compulsory unionism. From the factories came concerns - as in World War One - with the prices being set for garments and the details of accounting systems. Victorian members were especially critical of the haphazardness of planning. This was to be a central concern of Federal Council.

The Union had more access to the Government and to planners from March 1942 when the Department of War Organisation of Industry asked the Union to send representatives to a committee set up to deal with the problems of clothing production. The Committee's role was only to implement, not to decide, policy. Nevertheless the Union agreed to co-operate, accepting that this was their only option and hoping that, in general, the Labor Government would be sympathetic to workers. Federal Council remained anxious to secure a greater role in the selection of employers for military work and in price-fixing.

The Union's main success lay elsewhere. At the end of 1941, National Security Regulations had removed legal threats to the Outwork Award by suspending limitations upon the granting of preference. Compulsory unionism in the making of military garments could, the Union argued, be granted. This was done in 1942, underpinning subsequent union growth and strengthening ties with the Labor Government. As the

107. FC, Minutes, 23 April 1940; MC, Minutes, 12 August 1940.
108. Vic Branch, Minutes, 7, 18 June 1941; February-April 1942.
109. MC, Minutes, 6-10 March 1942; FC, Minutes, 21 April 1942.
110. FC, Federal Secretary's Report, 1942, pp.8, 9. See also FC, Minutes, 21 April 1942.
111. FC, Federal Secretary's Report, 1943, pp.3-5.
Union grew and the proportion of female membership increased, Council tried to maintain control of the craft sections. In 1942, after a long debate, Council drew up a list of priorities for the exemption of members from military service. It was hardly a surprising ordering, beginning with under-pressers and working through the male crafts to the cutters, who would be the last to be called-up. In addition, in factories 'substantially' used for military clothing, males should be exempt from military service. Craftsmen's fear of women 'diluting' the skills of cutting led them to loosen apprenticeship restrictions. The male ratios would be made more liberal rather than allow women in. This attitude had been adopted in Victoria in 1941. A firm employing an illegal number of cutters' apprentices was not prosecuted because, recorded the Minute,

there were grave dangers of dilution of labour being allowed in view of the shortage of skilled cutters.

While craftsmen tried to exclude women from their domain, it was attempts by the state and employers to restrict women's mobility that concerned officials. Because of the 'industrial conscription' of the Manpower regulations and restrictions on movement from 'protected' factories, women were often faced with bad conditions, privations and, not infrequently, sexual harassment; all this with little hope of redress or escape. Public servants were no less irksome than employers. Callard protested against

112. FC, Minutes, 20 April 1942.

113. Vic Branch, Minutes, 3 March 1941.

114. ibid., 1, 8 June, 9 November 1942; interviews, L. Brewer, J. Kenna.
the statements of costing clerks and members of the Contracts Department to the effect that employees were being paid too much for machining. 115

When this matter was raised at Council in 1943, some officials seemed aligned with the Contracts Board and unreservedly committed to the War effort. When told that many piece-workers in Victoria were making more money than ever before, 116 Fallon asked

Why are they squealing about prices then?
... It seems to me to be time we looked into our own house. 117

What the women were 'squealing about' was the pace and the hours of work and, often, the quality of material with which they had to work. 118 Council was most interested in the prices set for military goods. In these terms, the Union was successful, for in April 1943, the establishment of an advisory committee in the 'Price-Fixing Branch' was agreed to, following intense lobbying by Wallis. 119 If 'proper' prices were set, fair wages could be paid.

Within a few weeks of this, the Union's bargaining position was strengthened by Government recognition of an 'acute shortage' 120 of clothing. Wallis reported to a Special Federal Council in July that the Government proposed a national appeal to women to enter the

116. FC, Minutes, 12 April 1943; Callard later gave details at a meeting in Brisbane; see Qld Branch, Minutes, 13 June 1944.
117. FC, Minutes, 12 April 1943.
118. ibid.
119. ibid., 20 April 1943.
120. The phrase 'acute shortage' is taken from the opening to the meeting; SFC, Minutes, 12 July 1943.
clothing trades. Council agreed to drop its long-standing opposition to part-time labour. It also favoured increases in working hours although, only a few months earlier, Victorian members had rejected this possibility. What made these concessions seem worthwhile — and likely to be accepted in the Branches — was the proposal to increase women's wages to 75 per cent of men's and to have that wage as a 'flat rate' throughout the trade. Women could, thereby, move from place to place and job to job without loss of pay. Employers agreed to this, not least because, under some conditions, the Government was to subsidise the increased payment. At the climax of the War crisis then, the Arbitration Court was reduced in importance but the state's general role in the industry became over-arching. Two fundamental wage principles — Women's Basic Wage and 'margins for skill' were transformed. By the middle of 1944, less was being heard of the industry's production needs and, although labour was still scarce, attention in the state and the Union turned to the future.

Council's meeting for 1944 heard delegates from the Ministry of Supply propose 'Rehabilitation Committees' to train ex-servicemen. Although sceptical, Councillors believed that the Union must have a voice in the scheme. By April 1945, when a Rehabilitation Committee had been formed, the training and payment of 'green labour' was becoming, for peace-time, as problematical as it had been in the War in other industries. Men's wages could be subsidised by the state as, in war,

121. ibid., 12, 13 July 1943; MC, Minutes, 1 September 1943. See also, for a summary of the changes, FC, Federal Secretary's Report, 1945, p.11.
122. FC, Minutes, 19, 20 April 1944.
women's had been. Just as male unionists became more active again in 1944/45, so the problems of men resumed primacy in the minds of the Union's Leaders. The implications of these developments chiefly unfolded in relation to equal pay, in which context they will be examined.

The post-War years saw the Union's leaders trying to deal also with more familiar, indeed, endemic, problems: timing systems and incentive schemes. The eagerness with which many workers defended particular piece-rates meant, as favourable conditions continued, that officials became less inclined than ever to oppose piece-rate systems themselves. The very shortage of labour which at first strengthened the position of women workers encouraged employers to adopt different forms of payment and to introduce new 'timing systems'. One firm became known to the Victorian Branch for filming its employees.

Others brought in Industrial Accountants - 'time and motion men' to the workers - to improve efficiency. In this framework, contradictions of piece-work remained. Secretary Smith reported in 1947 that women continued to earn good money. As a result, some shirt factories were abandoning piece-work and 'reverting to weekly wage payments'. This hints strongly at successful work by members in

123. ibid., 11 October 1945. The men were paid full wages regardless of output, the state paying a portion until training was complete.

124. Vic Branch, Minutes, 23 February 1948.

setting rates and bonuses. To defend the position officials urged stewards and workers to watch new systems carefully.126

The Union's 'official' policy on piece-work was clarified in a context where some employers were rejecting piece-work but others, perhaps most, trying to refine it. In disputes in 1948, the Victorian Chamber of Manufacturers announced its opposition to increased piece-rates. This put the Union, through Organiser MacSween, in the curious - or ingenious - position of arguing that employers were undermining incentive schemes.127 This was a timely claim because, only six months earlier in conference with the Government and the ACTU, employers had emphasised the importance of such schemes.128

Federal Council in 1949 confirmed the trend towards favouring piece-work by asserting that incentive schemes

which are operated under the complete control of the Union concerned are in the best interests of the workers.

Further, delegates to any conferences discussing incentives were to support incentive schemes were such 'control' existed.129 At the same time, Council declared 'its uncompromising opposition to all forms of time and motion study systems or the use of stop-watches'.130 There

126. Vic Branch, Minutes, 17 October 1947; 28 February, 31 October, 7 November 1949; NSW Branch, Minutes, 28 February 1949.
127. Vic Branch, Minutes, 12 April 1948. The opposition to incentives seems to have come from shirt factories, those now becoming keen on wage-systems.
129. FC, Minutes, 29 April 1949.
130. ibid., 3 May 1949.
could be little doubt that Branches would endorse these resolutions. South Australia had identified incentive schemes, with the detailed conflicts over rates and tasks as the main problem in the Union's Awards but it had not recorded any opposition in principle to piece-work. In general, as had always been the case, employers preference for wage-systems could only confirm unionists' support for piece-work. Where piece-work remained, or expanded, defence of particular rates seemed easily to become support for incentives themselves. And through all this, short-term interests, through relatively good earnings, seemed to be secure. In other unions, opposition to piece-work was declining such that by 1951, the ACTU Executive would succeed in its demand for an inquiry into incentive schemes - a demand particularly galling for craft unions like the AEU. After years of war and now in a booming economy, the Union had drawn closer to both the state and, in some ways, to employers. Within both relationships there had been change and there remained tensions. This was especially clear in the Union's defence of basic conditions through arbitration.

(iii) ARBITRATION

I WAR AND REGULATION 1940-46

In the Arbitration Court in 1940 the Union's advocates were more concerned with completing the 1939 Award than with the implications of

the War. To try to avoid a challenge to the legality of the compulsory unionism clauses, Justice Drake-Brockman had allowed for employers to seek 'exemptions', which the employers insisted should be valid for the period of the Award. The Union at first wanted them done away with but Drake-Brockman ruled that they would last for six months and be renewable thereafter.133 Subsequently, Federal Secretary Wallis came to share Drake-Brockman's view that retaining the clauses might prevent legal disputes over the whole Award.134 The Award created tension within the Union as well as with employers because the administration of the permits was marked by what the South Australians called a 'lack of cohesion' between the main Branches.135 At Federal Council, 1940, it was decided to allow each Branch to work out details itself. Wallis was highly critical of this, believing that Federal Awards should be administered uniformly and that Awards could be endangered by local variations. Even the arbitration system highlighted the weakness of the Federal office.136

The first part of the War was a difficult time for Unions. The ACTU's Basic Wage Case stumbled from postponement to cancellation and individual unions struggled for 'war loadings'.137 Once the ACATU's

133. 42 CAR 738, 741.
134. See Wallis' remarks at FC, Minutes, 21 May 1942.
135. SA Branch, Minutes, 12 February 1940.
136. Wallis threatened to resign on the issue; FC, Minutes, 22 April 1940; MC, Minutes, 8 August, 27 September 1940.
claims were dealt with, officials were pleased, describing the Awards as 'excellent' and 'outstanding'. \(^{138}\) Drake-Brockman awarded the first improvements in margins since 1923, giving 5s for men and 2s 6d for women. The Union had claimed a 9s increase for men, seeking parity with compositors, but the Judge was impressed by employers' claims about War-time difficulties. \(^{139}\) Margins remained low: the tailor's was 21 per cent of the Basic Wage of 89s 6d; the female trouser and vest-hand's was 11 per cent of women's Basic Wage of 49s 6d. Even this rate was, in proportional terms, a major increase on the margins for 1923, rising from 3s to 5s 6d.

Gains like this followed an ever surer habituation to arbitration. In 1940 the Victorians formally reiterated their belief in 'constitutional methods' and re-stated the claim that the Union should be rewarded for eschewing direct action. \(^{140}\) Rhetoric aside - for direct action was never abandoned - the commitment to 'constitutional methods' was clear. Wallis had had 'confidential' briefings from Judge and Registrar and all Federal Councillors had agreed on the techniques of Court work: the Union should 'help' the Judge by concentrating on major issues; and officials should not worry him

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\(^{138}\) Vic Branch, Minutes, 11, 18 November 1940 for the Executive's and Wallis' response. For discussion prior to the Award, MC, Minutes, 26 September 1940; for a resume of the claim, FC, Federal Secretary's Report, 1941, p.3; and for the Awards, 43 CAR 124, 195.

\(^{139}\) The compositor's margin was 27s, the fitter's was 30s, the tailor's now 23s. See T. Sheridan, opc.it., pp.150-1; J. Hagan, Printers and Politics, p.271; J. Hutson, op.cit., p.233.

\(^{140}\) Vic Branch, Minutes, 19 October 1940; see also 28 July 1941.
'unduly'.141 All these tactics, and more, were necessary to secure 'war loadings'. The Union campaigned for a 6s loading for both men and women as part of the fair deal of war-time effort.142 Delays caused immense anxiety amongst members as did the ATWU's 'iniquitous Award' in which War loadings were rejected.143 An amended claim, seeking loadings for war work only was drawn up by Management Committee.144 Between then - September - and November, when the case was heard, circumstances changed. Labor came to office and the claim was amended to more orthodox male to female ratios. Following heavy lobbying of Ministers and of the Court, War loadings of 5s for men and 3s for women were awarded for all clothing work.145 Victorian officials also attributed success to 'action on the job'.146

Thereafter, under the National Security Regulations, the Union dealt more with both Government and employers than with the Court. Uniquely, this lesser emphasis on formal arbitration did not reduce the work of Federal Council. Council's role in the Union and the industry became clearest in 1943 when the Government tacitly acknowledged that neither war loadings nor 'Manpower' had secured

141. Vic Branch, Minutes, 19 October 1940; MC, Minutes, 8 November 1940; see also MC, Minutes, 1 July 1941.

142. MC, Minutes, 30 June, 1 July 1941.

143. Vic Branch, Minutes, 8 September 1941; for rank-and-file hostility see also 28 July 1941; MC, Minutes, 15 September 1941.

144. MC, Minutes, 16 September 1941.


146. Vic Branch, Minutes, 17 November 1941.
sufficient labour for the clothing trade. Although the '75 per cent rate' agreement was based upon negotiations, the state's role was enhanced because the Government would, in turn, subsidise up to 75 per cent of increased wage costs. The agreement was merely 'rubber-stamped' in the Arbitration Court. Drake-Brockman emphasised that the increase was a wartime measure only and must not be regarded as something that will endure after the war is over.

Just as had taken place after the Outwork Award, there was a series of disputes over the interpretation of the new rates. Victorian and South Australian members applauded the Award but Fallon claimed that his members considered the implications to be 'slavery' because Drake-Brockman had ruled that tasks could be 're-determined'. In fact this caused very little comment in the Branches. Neither did the impact of the flat rate on 'relativities' as between grades of women. Wages were, on average, much higher now but there were, in effect, no margins. Caution would be advisable in assessing the impact on earnings because many women had already been making £6 weekly, that is, over 30s more than the male base rate of 1940. The only

147. SFC, Minutes, 13 July 1943.
148. 51 CAR 632 at 635.
149. Vic Branch, Minutes, 22 December 1943; SA Branch, Minutes, 6 March 1949.
150. Copy of telegram, P. Fallon to A.R. Wallis, ANU E/138/18/16. Also, correspondence A.R. Wallis to Federal Councillors, 17 January, 26 March 1944; FC, Minutes, 17 April 1944. Wallis said he was 'heartily sick of this misrepresentation'. The subsequent expressions of regret at his resignation, from NSW members, rather undermine Fallon's claim. See NSW Branch, Minutes, 15 May 1944.
151. Callard's figures in Qld Branch, Minutes, 13 June 1944.
recorded divisions were those between officers, leading, this time to Wallis' resignation.

Wallis subsequently reviewed the Union's gains in the Victorian Branch's journal. His claims must be seen in a similar way to Carter's 'apologias' for arbitration in 1920 and 1933 in that a personal role as much as principle was being defended. Wallis identified four major gains: the increase in membership due to the contract clauses, increased margins, war loadings and the 75 per cent rate under which some women had received a rise of over 18s per week. In short the 'twin aims' of the Union had been secured - if by means wider than arbitration - with recognition of the Union, some measure of control being won and wages being advanced. It might now be possible, despite Drake-Brockman's disclaimer, to build upon the foundations of the 75 per cent rate.

After the War, the Union at first concentrated upon claims for annual leave and better margins. The former could be demanded as a 'reward' for efforts in the War but it was in fact part of a long history of trying to secure payments for both holidays and lost-time. Two weeks paid annual leave and sick pay were granted by the Court in February 1946. The margins claim was not heard until the Regulations had expired. To keep the 75 per cent rate became all-consuming. The extension of the Regulations until 31 December 1946 gave some

152. ACTJ, September 1944.

153. 56 CAR 136, 140. Other unions had already won these improvements.
breathing space. The immediate security of the rate was obtained in April 1946 when the clothing trade was declared a 'vital industry'. Finally, on 11 November, Drake-Brockman agreed to vary the Awards such that the rate would remain in force. Federal Council had been unsure how to proceed, fearing a reduction in women's wages. Not all unions did secure the rate. For the clothing worker, contradictory elements in wage-fixation had emerged from the War and the Regulations; work value, the family wage, regulation 'versus' arbitration all necessitated thought in the post-War world.

II ARBITRATION 1947-1950

With Labor still in office after 'regulation' ended, unionists could hope for changes in the arbitration structure and for a resolution of the 'legacy of war'. From 1943 the ACTU had been asking for an inquiry into the Basic Wage and in 1945 had proposed the abolition of the Arbitration Court in favour of conciliation. The CATU's Federal Council also wanted change, arguing for a 'Clothing Trades' Tribunal'. This demand arose because of delays in arbitration procedure experienced by the Union since 1918 and from a belief that

154. 57 CAR 473, 475.

155. For Union discussions and policy see FC, Federal Secretary's Report, 1946, p.29; FC, Minutes, 5, 10 April 1946; Vic Branch, Minutes, 26 April, 18 November 1946; 20 January 1947; NSW Branch, Minutes, 16 December 1946.


157. SFC, Minutes, 18 October 1944.
the Union merited special attention because it organised in a 'female trade'. By 1946, Federal Secretary Callard was reduced to proposing the Union's 'fall-back position' - that a special tribunal be established for women. In that year, a Coal Industry Tribunal was set up but it had become clear that there would be no comparable structure for clothing workers. Instead there was a general reform of arbitration, granting few of the ACTU's demands.

Conciliation Commissioners would hear cases on all matters except hours, annual leave and the Basic Wage. The Court would deal with these issues. Callard pointed to the importance of the characteristics of 'the personnel appointed' as Commissioners. Only a 'long association with the Industry' would enable a Commissioner to perform better than Drake-Brockman - an ironic remark in view of the ACTU's hostility to his appointment in 1927. In fact, one of the best known characteristics of the appointee, G.A. Findlay, was that he had once been Prime Minister Chifley's chauffeur.

Although the arbitration structure was new, unionists' demands on it were not. The CATU demanded the restoration of women's margins as at 1940. The 'flat-rate' had made the margins question more complex than before but had not destroyed the principle of 'secondary wages'.

Callard reported that there was only 1s 6d between the weekly wages of button sewers and female order-cutters compared with 20 6d under the old margins. Margins should be restored - on the 75 per cent Basic Wage. Meanwhile, men's margins were being increased in other trades. The CATU hoped for similar treatment.

On 22 December 1947, Commissioner Findlay delivered an interim judgment which increased most male margins by 8s but left women's rates unchanged until they could 'be investigated fully'. CATU members demanded to know where lay the post-War 'just deal' in this. Findlay re-opened the case in January 1948, admitting that the industry's margins made 'a perfectly obvious anomalous position'. His decision, on 1 April, included some major changes in meeting most of the claim. Men secured, for the first time, parity with the metal trades: the order-cutter receiving the toolmaker's 60s, the tailor the 46s fitter's margin. Turning to women, Findlay believed that it would be 'a grave injustice' if margins were not re-instated. Machinists were to receive 7s 6d on stock-trouser and

162. SFC, Federal Secretary's Report, October 1946, p.6.
163. SFC, Minutes, 21 October 1946. Fitters had received a 16s increase in 1947 after a long dispute; compositors won a 17s 6d increase in 1948; T. Sheridan, op.cit, pp.176-7; J. Hagan, Printers and Politics, p.281.
164. 60 CAR 695 at 697.
166. 60 CAR 695 at 700.
167. ibid., at 702. Fitters had a further 6s from their war loadings; tailors, 5s.
vest work, 10s for order work and up to 15s on coats. Findlay rejected employers' claims that the 75 per cent base rate amply rewarded women's skills.168 Most machinists' margins rose by just 2s, though, on the rates set in 1940.

Federal Council's annual meeting began only a few days after the Award was handed down. NSW delegates led the cry for a reconsideration of the presser's margin because it had been set below the tailor's for the first time since the inception of Federal Awards. Not until the afternoon of the second day of conference were women's margins discussed.169 Callard's claim that skill had finally been recognised was accepted by most members170 although this recognition, for women, seemed to lie more in the words Findlay offered than in the rates he set. Still, 'restoration' had been secured.

Council was sufficiently encouraged to proceed with a full log of claims, central to which was preference or compulsory unionism. NSW threatened industrial 'rebellion' if the claim were rejected.171 Considerable increases in margins were sought such that women's wages would be in the same proportion to men's as had obtained under the 75 per cent flat rate. The hearing settled a long-standing complaint by consolidating the tailoring and dressmaking awards as - for the first

168. ibid., at 701-2.
169. FC, Minutes, 12, 13 April 1948.
170. FC, Federal Secretary's Report, 1949, p.22; NSW Branch, Minutes, 5 July, 9 September 1948; Vic Branch, Minutes, 26 July 1948.
171. NSW Branch, Minutes, 7 March 1949; see also Vic Branch, Minutes, 7 March 1949.
time - one 'clothing trade award'. The Union's wishes were also met by a restructuring of the award to make it less complicated. The decision was handed down in March 1950. Findlay tried to make the Union's position stronger by dropping the Exemption Clauses. The preference issue was, however, taken out of his hands due to an appeal on technical matters. Employers were not the Union's only concern. Testament to the changing industry - and the failure of amalgamation schemes - was the intervention of the ATWU, the AWU, the Leather Trades' Union and the Felt Hatters. Most objections to the CATU's list of respondents were withdrawn or set aside. Findlay did deal with the AWU, 'reluctantly' allowing it to continue to cover North Queensland.

Men's margins were unchanged because Findlay adopted the standard practice of following the metal trades. No increase had taken place there since 1947. There were some minor alterations and the presser was restored to parity with the tailor. For women, though, there were substantial changes. Some coat-hands received equal margins with tailors and there were increases for all other grades. Trouser-machinists' margins were doubled from 7s 6d to 15s. Women's margins had been as low as one-sixth of tailors' for many years. They now stood at about a third after Findlay tried to assess women's skills against the female 'aristocrats', the order coat-hands. The

172. 66 CAR 481. Awards were now referred to by date rather than by the first-named respondent.

173. ibid., at 494. The Union secured coverage of dry-cleaners in the new Award (ibid., at 483).
Commissioner, then, seemed more amenable to Union demands for innovation than the Judges had been. Difficulties and contradictions in the equal pay issue still remained.

III EQUAL PAY 1939-1950

On the face of it, the War had brought many changes for women workers. The equal pay campaign had built upon the base established in the 1930s by securing the formal support of the NSW Labor Council in 1940 and in putting the issue on the ACTU's agenda in 1941.174 In wages' terms, clothing workers had made substantial gains in the War and up to the Award of 1950. With increased margins on the 75 per cent Base Wage, women's wages at last rose to more than half of men's. Female trouser-machinists now earned 65 per cent of a tailor's wage and 67 per cent of a male machinist's. Still, these increases were not in the same striking ratio as the advance from 54 to 75 per cent at the base because women's margins had been so low until 1950. Even in that Award it was debatable to what extent skill was really 'recognised'. The questions of women's skills, right to work and equal pay were clearly posed by both the War and its aftermath.

Early in the War, craftsmen's traditional responses seemed to be evidence of women taking up new roles. In 1941 Council called for equal pay for women on pressing-machines.175 Later, the demand was

175. FC, Minutes, 7 April 1941.
reiterated and equal pay sought for work on heavy overcoats. In both cases the discussions prior to the demands and the limited range of the equal pay claim clearly suggest that equal pay was being sought in order to preserve men's jobs. The Court, too, continued to enforce standard practices. Thus, war loadings were higher for men than women. At first, then, it seemed that the War would not create new openings in industry. Even when women moved into 'heavy industry', Prime Minister Curtin had emphasised that such jobs would only be held 'for the duration'. When the CAEP reviewed the changing industrial scene and demanded equal pay for women in 'men's jobs', it merely stated an aim with which exclusivist male unionists agreed.

The ACATU was in a difficult position. Its members could not claim the benefits of the Women's Employment Board and, indeed, Wallis wanted to keep the Union out of the Board. Clothing workers on 'men's work' could secure equal pay; those remaining in women's work were ineligible for the Board's consideration and, in any case, won the 75 per cent rate in 1943. Many members would have agreed with Muriel Heagney that the Board only 'confirmed old inequalities and created new ones'.

176. ibid., 16 April 1943 (overcoats); 18 May 1944 (pressing).
177. See L. Beaton, op.cit., p.88; J. Hagan, ACTU, pp.72, 112-3.
178. Reported in Vic Branch, Minutes, 23 September 1940.
179. Correspondence, A.R. Wallis to E.J. Holloway, 26 February 1944; ANU, E 138/18/62.
180. Quoted in NSW Branch, Minutes, 24 November 1947.
Some agreed with Heagney's view that leading individuals in the union movement were unsympathetic to women workers. Extraordinarily, the ACATU was 'overlooked' when an ACTU delegation was selected to discuss equal pay with the Government. Heagney, too, was excluded, an event which did not surprise Wallis because, he said,

she stood pat for the implementation of the ACTU policy of full equality for the sexes whilst a number of Unions was anxious to change this policy.

The attitude of most members of Federal Council was not necessarily in accord with Wallis or Heagney. In the first major discussion of women's war work, Victorian delegates reported on the precedents being set in textile factories where women were cutting and in dry-cleaning establishments where they were pressing. From one perspective, these jobs represented a widening of opportunities for women. From another, they might mean more intense exploitation because, if Awards did not prescribe rates for women - or specifically include women in job definitions - then only the female basic wage had to be paid, whatever the work.

None of these problems attracted prolonged discussion at Council during the War. The limited charter of the Board, emphasis on the peculiarities of war, the setting of a 75 per cent flat rate and, perhaps, the high earnings of some female piece-hands constrained

181. MC, Minutes, 9 January 1942.
182. ibid., 10 March 1942.
183. FC, Minutes, 23 April 1942. This was not, of course, so much a concern after 1943.
development of programmes for equal pay. Questions about peace-time jobs and pay did excite Council's attention. Not only was there a general tendency to 'return to normal' but there could be a specific threat to women's employment in schemes for preference for ex-Servicemen. In April 1943, Council discussed the implications for women. Wallis opposed such preference, claiming that its backers do not understand they are supporting the Hitler idea. They fall into the trap and say women's place is in the home; the Nazi trinity, the church, the home and the kitchen.184

Council agreed to support women's right to work. Two Branches resolved that this right should be underwritten by the provision of creches.185 These sorts of initiatives were in direct contrast to the traditional 'exclusivist' base of equal pay demands. The new direction was soon challenged - not from changes in the industry but from the activities of the state.

Equal pay as a Union goal was confirmed by Council in 1945, although the motivation was unclear.186 Some Branches had reversed their policy on Servicemen's preference. In Queensland, Industrial Officer Olive Kenny moved that the Union should not handicap the re-entry of soldiers by agreeing to further encroachment into the industry of females on work that is recognised as male work.187

184. ibid., 14 April 1943. Queensland's Olive Kenny attended Council as the first woman delegate. She was deputed to take the Minutes while arguments about 'women's place' unfolded.

185. SA Branch, Minutes, 8 June 1942; Vic Branch, Minutes, 20 September 1943.

186. FC, Minutes, 11 October 1945.

In March 1945, the South Australian Branch had 'unanimously' decided that it would not oppose preference for ex-Servicemen. The Branch Secretary, David Fraser, later put an alternative view. He noted that, during the War, 'girls' who had wanted to be dress-makers had been transferred to military work and, he said, 'were now nothing more than process workers'. Should there not be 'Rehabilitation Schemes' for them? This argument was not heard again. By August 1946, Fraser was one of those concerned at the number of married women 'holding positions to the detriment of males'.

By the end of 1946, there were 265 ex-Servicemen being trained in Melbourne on subsidised wages and 40 on full pay. One firm in Brisbane was training 25 ex-Servicemen as sewing-machinists. Even those Branches resisting the popular clamour for preference for ex-Servicemen were bound up with the Rehabilitation Schemes and concerns about the men's subsequent job prospects. The activities of the state actually modified the sex-typing of jobs in the trade. The effects upon the Union and its equal pay pronouncements were extraordinary. The Labor Government had not only changed policy on Servicemen's preference but it had tried to 'sell' factory work as 'a career with a future'.

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188. SA Branch, Minutes, 2 March 1945.
189. ibid., 17 September 1945.
190. ibid., 12 August 1946.
191. Vic Branch, Secretary's Report, 1946, pp.9, 10; Minutes, 17 September, 12 October 1946; 15 February 1947; SFC, Minutes, 21 October 1946.
192. L. Beaton, op.cit., p.96.
193. The Minister for Labour, E.J. Holloway, quoted, ibid.
Similarly, the ACATU's officials began to describe their industry in new ways. In 1933, Herbert Carter had described it as 'a vicious system'; now the Australian Clothing Trades' Journal ran a front-page headline thus 'Union Welcomes Ex-Servicemen To Congenial Lifetime Trade'. Articles described how women were unanimously in favour of continuous employment for ex-Servicemen and how most favoured equal pay as a means to this end. In view of the long history of women's marginal position as paid workers and of the pressures on women to return to the home these views were not surprising. Nor was the attitude of most of the leadership.

When Federal Council met in 1946, NSW delegates were the most vociferous about men's rights but it was Victorian Assistant-Secretary Ted Smith who made the first specific suggestion, mooting a quota of women to men (just as the craft unions had established). Queensland Secretary Sparks was willing to risk 'over-loading' the cutting and pressing divisions with men (just as apprenticeship ratios had been relaxed in the War). Fraser suggested that women who had children had a right to work but, in Wallis' absence, it was left to Callard to speak for the majority of members, the women. Allowing returned soldiers - or any group - to 'dictate the policy of the Union was very much akin to the tail wagging the dog'. Demands for a quota, he went on, were 'wrong, unreal and dangerous'.

194. ACTJ, June 1946.
195. ibid.
196. SFC, Minutes, 21 October 1946.
Council merely resolved to try to secure equal pay through negotiation. Neither a quota nor, conversely, women's right to work, was mentioned in the resolution.197

At the next meeting of Council, ex-Servicemen's job security was discussed again. Wallis suggested that an equal pay claim could be framed in terms of defending male jobs because the Court would be more likely to grant it on those terms. The Union could also argue that 'their aptitude for the sewing trades' allowed girls to learn more quickly than boys. Therefore, the girls' shorter apprenticeship should not be a bar to equal pay.198 This argument had been developed by Wallis in 1938, trying to defuse the 'de-skilling' argument about women's work. Wallis was prepared to work within accepted frameworks to try to secure wage breakthroughs. Other delegates would not even go this far.

Equal pay had become, again, a defence of males' jobs. It was argued over by men at Federal Council not by members in the Branches. Not only were hopes for equal pay slim but there were changes in the politics of the labour movement, as new forces emerged for which the role of women and of unions in Australia were central questions.

197. ibid. Fallon ruled a quota out of order more because of Victoria's leading role in Rehabilitation, perhaps, than from any other motive.

198. FC, Minutes, 22 April 1947.
(iv) POLITICS

Political intervention became more complex than ever before. So great were the contradictions between and within some Branches that Federal Council's 'apolitical' tradition was ruptured. There were also continuities: a left-wing opposition to the NSW leadership, conflicts between the Victorian Branch and the ALP and conflicts over relations with the ACTU. Looking at Federal Council's ties with the ACTU and the ALP begins to suggest something of the politics of the Union.

Peter Fallon's long-standing hostility to the ACTU came to be shared by officers who believed that 'female unions' fared poorly compared, especially, with the metal unions. The increase of CPA influence was not discussed but was almost certainly important. Thus, in 1945, Council opposed ACTU plans for increased affiliation fees, crying poor. The most radical Branch, Victoria, was alone in supporting the increases. Unease increased in 1946-47. Federal Secretary Callard attacked the ACTU's handling of the Forty-Hour Week claim. Council resolved to reduce the numbers upon which it affiliated to the ACTU. When the ACTU proposed a general stoppage as part of the hours campaign, the Union's anxieties increased. David Fraser put an increasingly common view: the CATU

199. ibid., 23 April 1940. The Union wanted direct access to Government as the AEU had (for which see T. Sheridan, op.cit., pp.147-8).

200. Vic Branch, Minutes, 27 June, 9 July 1945; compare with FC, Minutes, 5 October 1945.

201. FC, Federal Secretary's Report, 1946, p.25; Minutes, 23 October 1946.
was a woman's Union and its problems were not properly understood or considered by the ACTU.

Wallis believed that, because it would not affect 'the community or the Government, a strike was inappropriate. Delegates moved to distance themselves from ACTU policy, agreeing that ACTU proposals should be examined in the context of the industry's 'special problems and circumstances'. ACTU recommendations would have to be ratified by Federal Council.202 Apart from anything else, this could well be a satisfactory delaying tactic. Oddly, as the Union made this move, the ACTU was beginning to shed its militancy and other unions were criticising the ACTU's conservative impact upon them.203

Conflict with other unions and the ACTU remained. The increasing acceptance of incentive schemes led to contradictions. Some CATU delegates to the ACTU claimed that they opposed an inquiry because piece-rates were unsatisfactory in other industries.204 Such opposition accorded well with the militant craft unions' view but the practice of the Union did not. This practice, and opposition to ACTU plans for direct action, identified the Union with the anti-communists - a tendency which was highlighted by Council's decision in 1949 to oppose the 'red' World Federation of Trade Unions. The vote also showed up continuing divisions in the Union because both South Australia and Victoria supported ACTU affiliation to the Federation.205

202. FC, Minutes, 16 April 1947.
204. FC, Minutes, 19 April 1948.
205. ibid., 29 April 1949.
There was more unity in relations with the Labor Government. Labor's policies and the consequent changes in the industry—especially compulsory unionism in war-work—led officials to agree with Wallis that hardships were outweighed many times by ... the Labor Government ... making it possible for our Union to add to its ranks several thousand new members.206

Actions followed words in the provision of interest-free War Loans to the Government and generous funding of the ALP.207 Broad support for the Curtin Government did not prevent conflicts within the Branches. Political demands became inter-twined with questions about the relation between the Union and the labour movement and, increasingly, about the nature of unionism itself.

Early in 1941, Victorian members urged the Menzies Government to recognise China as an 'ally fighting for democracy' and to cease such trade with Japan as was 'detrimental' to China.208 Issues like this had more direct implications from the winter of 1941. When the Soviet Union was invaded, members discussed the ramifications and supported the very public part played in the Australian-Soviet Friendship League by Wallis and Callard.

Because the Victorian Branch of the ALP continued to suspect anything in which the CPA was involved, it instructed its members not to


207. SFC, Minutes, 19 October 1944; FC, Minutes, 3, 4 October 1945; 22 October 1946.

208. Vic Branch, Minutes, 20 January 1941.
associate with the League. Wallis defied this edict for some time and then quit the League to fight the decision in the ALP.209 Despite the ALP's attitude, the communists in the Union were at least as supportive of the Curtin Government as Wallis and his colleagues. Thus, when the ALP finally 'recognised' the League, communists agreed with Callard that the Branch should not affiliate but, instead, spend money on increased funding of the ALP.210

It was Branch officials, not communists, who fell out with the ALP in Victoria. When Curtin began to look for support for his plans to send conscripted troops on overseas service, the Branch agreed to support him,211 thus isolating itself from the State's ALP Executive and prominent Federal parliamentarians. Initiatives like this highlighted the Branch's commitment to the War effort and, in turn, encouraged CPA co-operation. Haddon had already moved a vote of confidence in the ALP and urged unity.212 Immediately after the invasion of the Soviet Union, a group of communist members had had a special meeting. Officials had protested against what they called

209. ibid., 21 July-6 October 1941, passim. There is a great deal of League material in Wallis' papers at ANU E138/18/66. Two other ex-VSP members were involved, Chapple (Railways) and Percy Laidler.

210. Vic Branch, Minutes, 9 December 1942. Haddon seconded the motion.

211. ibid., 14 December 1942.

212. ibid., 24 August 1942.
'hole and corner' methods. Since then, internal unity had prevailed.

After the conscription controversy, the Victorian Branch became involved in a prolonged and complicated struggle with the leadership of the Victorian ALP. The Party's Assistant-Secretary Pat Kennelly attacked the Union's role in pre-selection ballots whilst Branch delegates to the State ALP Conference of 1943 complained that the Party was against the Union, the CPA and John Curtin. These conflicts came to a head in May, when Organiser Ted Smith opposed a MTHC motion which declared that only the ALP was able to represent workers in Parliament. Smith moved an amendment adding the CPA and was charged by the ALP Executive with 'conduct not befitting a member'. The Branch promptly withheld ALP affiliation fees.

Similar conflicts in other unions had led to the formation of a 'Convening Committee', strongly critical of the ALP and MTHC leadership. The Branch became tied with this organisation whilst rejecting another breakaway group more aligned with the CPA, the 'Trades Union Advisory Committee'. The conflicts were smoothed over in 1944 but the left-ALP traditions of the Branch were retained. Political intervention was seen in terms of alliances with all

213. ibid., 4 July 1941.

214. ibid., 3 May 1943. The course of the dispute is recorded in the Minutes until 15 November 1943; it is at once too involved and ill-reported to record here.

215. See Wallis' working papers at ANU, E138/18/69.

216. Vic Branch, Minutes, 1 February 1944.
socialist parties and individuals willing to work with Branch officials. Before the divisions of the late-1940s and 1950s, then, the Victorian Branch was already in conflict with labour leaderships about the role of communists and radicals in unions.

The Victorian pattern, of harmony within its ranks and conflict outside them, was not found elsewhere. By 1945 the NSW Branch had become distinctly factionalised between what could be called the 'Old Guard' of long-serving conservative officials (Fallon, Gibb and Murphy) and three groups of challengers - a growing 'New Right' strongly opposed to communism 'led' by pressers' delegate J. (Jack) Kenna; a left-ALP grouping around President W. (Billy) Egan; and a number of rank-and-filers in or sympathetic to the CPA. As had been the case in the 1930s, the communists were mainly young women frequently concerned with trying to broaden Union aims and perspectives. Their influence seems to have peaked in 1942-43 with what Fallon believed was an assault on his position. The specific circumstances were the discovery of a protracted embezzlement by Organiser Jones of £920; the CPA was unable to build upon its base and oust the leadership.

Similarly, in Queensland, the 'popular front' policy of the CPA did

217. £920 was a huge amount given that officials were not being paid more than about £10 a week. Communists criticised what they saw as Fallon's 'cover-up'. 'Groupers' later believed Fallon was more involved than that. There are no Minutes for this period. For this incident and the CPA, see CPA leaflet 'Clothing Trades Officials Still Protect Robber of Union Funds' (n.d.), ANU, E193/37/19; FC, Minutes, 19 April 1943. Also, interviews K. Collins, J. Kenna.
not prevent a group of communists trying to overturn the leadership. Members complained that they were kept 'unfinancial', that the Branch was ineffective and that rules were being consistently broken. They asked for Federal intervention and received some indications of support from Victorian officers but found that Council closed ranks around Secretary Sparks. He insisted on the expulsion of the 'disruptionists', as he called them, and he was able to survive all challenges. In January 1943, the CPA's Valma Fraser was elected Secretary at a meeting boycotted by Sparks' supporters. The election was subsequently voided. By 1944 Sparks was not encountering any opposition.218 There, as in South Australia, the Branch remained uninfluenced by political alternatives.

It was these conflicts which gave the first hints that Council might be 'politicised'. In 1943, Federal delegates discussed Fallon's handling of the 'Jones affair' and the role of communists in the three Eastern States.219 In the following year, delegates apparently persuaded the Victorians to reverse a decision favouring the CPA's affiliation with the ALP.220 The break finally came in 1947, largely as a result of contradictions within the NSW Branch. The CPA's

218. Qld Branch, Minutes, 18 December 1944; Correspondence, 'Queensland Disputes', ANU, E138/18/61 including a CPA leaflet 'Are You a Financial Member of the Clothing Trades' Union?' (n.d.).

219. FC, Minutes, 19 April 1943.

220. Vic Branch, Minutes, 12, 24 April 1944; FC, Minutes, 1 May 1944. Council took pains to issue a press statement emphasising that the Union's policy did not favour affiliation. The Branch Minute is unusually restrained in describing the Executive's decision.
adventurist policy had seen members there attacking the Labor Government and Labor Council as well as Branch leaders.221 Despite its factional division, the Branch continued to send a solidly anti-communist delegation to Council. Similarly, the Queensland leadership was again encountering opposition but still secured 'the numbers' to control Council representation.222 Might not a declaration against communism or in favour of the Groups assist the officials in these States?

At Federal Council, two NSW delegates moved that the Union declare its support for Industrial Groups.223 Council was instantly divided because the Victorians had maintained their opposition to the right-wing ALP leaders of that State.224 They were joined by Callard in arguing that Groups could only divide the Union. The motion was watered down to a general statement in favour of the ALP but not before much of the bitterness and reductionism of the Split was presaged. When Wallis opposed the Groups, Fallon retorted that if Wallis was a Communist he should tell Council so. Comrade Wallis said he considered it appalling that he should be called upon to affirm his loyalty to the Labor Party.225

The two senior South Australian officers, Secretary McGregor and Organiser Fraser, took a different line of attack, deploiring the 'foolish and ... destructive' tactics of the CPA and opposing 'Communist groups or any other groups working subterraneously in

223. FC, Minutes, 22 April 1947.
225. FC, Minutes, 23 April 1947.
Unions'. Victorian delegates merely agreed with opposition to any groups in the Union. Fraser insisted that where the Union stood should be made clear. With Gerrets (NSW) he made, unwittingly, a unique assertion. There should be a political stance. Council should condemn the Communists. That Council should have an explicit political statement like this was without precedent. Argument, however, was more about the content than the implications of the statement. With Victoria, Callard and one NSW delegate in opposition, the motion moved by the South Australians was carried.226

In the short term, Federal Council 1947 proved to be more an anomaly than a turning-point. The resolution had little effect on the communists' activities in Queensland and NSW. The NSW Branch remained divided and, as more members became sympathetic with the Groups and with individuals like Kenna, factional lines became clearer. In no State, however, was the political tradition of a Branch overturned.

Despite the apparent unity of the Victorian Branch, it was there that a new challenge came. An Industrial Group was set up. The Branch had remained prominently anti-Grouper and it may well have attracted special attention from the Movement's leaders by appointing MacSween an organiser. In 1940, with general left-wing support, MacSween had almost defeated the ALP Executive's nominee, Pat Kennelly in a poll for ALP Assistant-Secretary. B.A. Santamaria later wrote that the closeness of the result had alerted him to the political implications

226. ibid.
of the role of communists in unions.\textsuperscript{227} The formation of a 'Clothing Trades' Group' may well have been grounded in this as much as in the Branch's continuing policy.

Wallis' resignation from the Union gave the Victorian Groupers the opportunity which the factions in NSW and the communists in Queensland could not force in their Branches. But, in the ballot for Branch Secretary in January 1948, Ted Smith easily defeated the Grouper G. Maynes.\textsuperscript{228} For the next few years debates raged over elections and meeting procedures, finance and rules, but officials retained majority support, refused to condemn the CPA or to support Industrial Groups. Ironically, they used the anti-communist resolutions of 1947 for their own ends. MacSween reminded members that Council had outlawed 'any groups' in the CATU.\textsuperscript{229} NSW's move had failed. Early in 1950, two new organisers were elected against Groupers\textsuperscript{230} and, with MacSween to the fore, Victorian delegates to that year's Federal Council felt bold enough to inquire into the sacking of Organiser Frank Nielsen in South Australia.\textsuperscript{231} This was almost as novel as the 'political' resolution

\textsuperscript{227} B.A. Santamaria, 'The Movement', in H. Mayer (ed.), \textit{Catholics and the Free Society} (Melbourne, 1961), p.64. MacSween was never a member of the CPA. In 1940 he was in the Clerks' Union in Melbourne.

\textsuperscript{228} Vic Branch, Minutes, 8 March 1948. Smith defeated Maynes by 4081 to 1460. Les Brewer defeated C. Keele in the ballot for a new organiser by a similar margin.

\textsuperscript{229} ibid., 6 June 1949. The references to these internal disputes are plentiful and fascinating. Attendances at meetings reached new peaks. On one occasion the Groupers admitted, 'we always get a fair go' at meetings (ibid., 4 April 1949).

\textsuperscript{230} ibid., 3 March 1950.

\textsuperscript{231} FC, Minutes, 17, 18, 26 April 1950.
three years earlier, and was, perhaps, a sign that disputes within the Branches might lead to conflicts between them. Few members wanted this but many wanted a resolution of the struggles against well-entrenched regimes in Queensland and NSW. These struggles now seemed more closely related to changes elsewhere in the labour movement. The Victorian CATU's response to the resolution of 1947 seemed, already, accurate: the Branch had feared that the existence of Groups was causing and will continue to cause disruption in the Unions and Branches and thus bring about a split within the ALP.232

(v) SUMMARY

From the beginnings of the War until the defeat of the Labor Party, there was more planning and regulation than ever before in Australia. There were also hopes that public control would be extended further. The CATU shared the frustrations of other unionists in that changes to the arbitration system were not more thorough. During the War, the Union had gained more from, and grown closer to, the state than at any other time. Its rapid growth was also under the aegis of the state as was the measure of control it secured in the industry. The Union also advanced by building upon the principles of 'closer amalgamation' - the Branches acted more harmoniously and the Federal office became more important. However, neither centralism nor unity endured. As in

1933, a change in the Federal leadership confirmed the Union's separatist, parochial tendencies. Unity between the Branches collapsed because of divisions within them, because of the lesser peace-time role of the state and because of growing challenges to the traditional nature of unionism. At no time since the OBU's threat to arbitration had there been such a situation. In this context, there was one kind of break, in the claim that the Union should have a federal political standpoint. This declaration came not from socialists trying to broaden the Union's aims but from conservative Laborites.

A second break was in the principles of female wage fixation. From 1919 to 1943 women's basic wages had hovered at about 54 per cent of men's. In the War they were raised to 75 per cent. In some sections of the trade, women had already secured substantial increases by a means as old as unionism - strong organisation in a position of scarcity. In peace-time, women's margins for skill were increased by, historically, very significant levels. Although, by 1950, established notions of the value of women's work seemed less stable, it was still difficult to see how to change attitudes to women's basic wages. How ideas about women's work and wages would relate to the apparently imminent conflicts in the Union was little discussed but is a problem to be addressed in the following chapter. Other aspects of the industry and the Union were more clearly open to change in the context of struggles within the labour movement.