CHAPTER 3

WOMEN'S WORK AND THE WAR 1942-1944

By July 1941 Eileen Powell and Robert Day, Joint Presidents of the CAEP optimistically stated that they were on the eve of victory once the CAEP's aims were incorporated into ACTU policy at its June 1 1941 Congress. By March 1942, however, Muriel Heagney stated in reaction to the establishment of the Women's Employment Board (WEB):

...the position of equal pay is very precarious. When representatives of the ACTU and Government agree to such conditions as those agreed in Canberra. I see little hope of achieving equal pay in the near future. 2

Obviously, the establishment of the WEB was not the victory the CAEP had been anticipating. With a Labor Government in Canberra from October 1941 and the support of the ACTU, the CAEP could confidently predict that the "rate for the job" would be implemented. The setting up of the WEB posed problems for the CAEP in that the Executive was critical of it from its inception, whereas other affiliates considered it to be a workable solution to the problem of women's wage rates in relation to females taking up positions previously occupied by men. Therefore the CAEP had to contend with dissension in its own ranks whilst still trying to agitate for equal pay. The Executive's attitude to Jessie Street and the Council for Women in War Work indicated that there was to be no co-operation with that organisation. During

1. CAEP Fourth Annual Report and Financial Statement, 1 July 1941. Heagney Papers. CAEP Minute Book 1940-1942. Box 1166/1. La Trobe Library.

the period 1942 to 1944 the CAEP continued to pressure the Government to legislate for equal pay in addition to encouraging the WEB to award the full rate for the jobs that women were performing because of the war situation. It encouraged individual unions to negotiate with employers directly to achieve equal pay and persisted with submissions to the Arbitration Court. Therefore it pursued the same style of tactics during this period while contending with both internal and external problems.

The circumstances leading to the establishment of the WEB require examination. Early in 1942 the War Cabinet on the recommendation of the man-power authorities decided to pursue a policy of replacement of males in industry by females after the realisation of the increased need for male personnel in the armed forces after the bombing of Pearl Harbour by the Japanese in December 1941 and the invasion of Singapore in February 1942. The policy presented a number of problems. These included the fixation of an equitable wage, the desires of the trade union movement to reserve for males as many occupations as possible, and the effect on the trade unions of opening to females occupations hitherto reserved for males. Lastly, there was the admission of females into those positions under the direction of industrial tribunals which were committed to a principle of female wage fixation permitting a payment of fifty-four per cent only of males' rates.

To meet these difficulties the Women's Employment Board was established as a wartime tribunal by National Security Regulations promulgated on 25 March 1942. The first case was called on for hearing on 12 May 1942. The WEB was to comprise an independent chairman, one employer and one employee representative. The Board met with strong
opposition from employers who saw it as a means of gaining equal pay and biased in favour of the employees and from some unions such as the New South Wales Teachers’ Federation and the Rubber Workers’ Union, who condemned it for not awarding the male rate. After attacks in the Federal Parliament, the Board was reconstituted with a changed personnel. It consisted of the same chairman, Judge A.W. Foster, two employees’ representatives, A.R. Wallis and A. Henderson, a representative of the Commonwealth Government, which was the largest employer of female labour, I. Cashman, and an employers’ representative. Messrs Johnson, Forrester and Upjohn acted in that capacity.

The aim of the WEB was to encourage and regulate the employment of women in work usually performed by men, to aid the war effort. The WEB had to decide whether females might be employed or continue to be employed on certain work. This was considered necessary because the employment of women under unsatisfactory conditions or on unsuitable work might provoke unrest, adversely affect health or morale, or could be an uneconomic use of the labour resources of the Commonwealth. The WEB was to discourage the employment of women as replacements to continue the work in luxury or non-essential industries. Concern was expressed that some conservative employers might have to be compelled to

3. Argus 14 January 1943, p.5. S.G. Wright alleged the ulterior motive of the WEB Act was to give effect to the Labor Party policy of equal pay for the sexes. Curlewis, Women’s Wages in the War Years 1940-1945, p.8.


5. Constance Larmour, "Women’s Wages and the WEB", in Curthoys, Eade and Spearritt (eds), Women at Work, p.49.

employ women in the jobs considered suitable for them. The WEB was to determine the hours of work and the maximum daily and weekly hours of the women employed and whether a probationary period would be required. Finally, it was to set the pay scales for these women in essential industries. The rate to be struck was to be not less than sixty per cent and not more than one hundred per cent of the adult male rate. Such factors as efficiency and productivity were major considerations when awarding the rates.

John Curtin, Labor Prime Minister of Australia from October 1941 until his death in July 1945, made a statement in Parliament subsequently reported in the newspapers, that the WEB would not be a "cheap labour" Board, but neither was it an equal pay Board. It preserved the demarcation between men's and women's jobs;

...to ensure that the men who are displaced do not have their economic standards eaten into by the incursion of women as a permanent economic feature. We must also keep faith with the women of this country and ensure that if they are capable of doing as much war work as men they shall be paid as if they were men. I believe that the Government's method of approaching this problem will safeguard the rights of both men and women, which was the Government's purpose in introducing this measure.

His speech highlighted the trade union concern to retain the sexual division of labour and to maintain the supremacy of the male in the workforce. Such a patriarchal attitude was displayed when he stated that women would be paid the male rate if they were capable of working as well as men, the assumption being that of course they could not.

The principle of the "rate for the job" had not been accepted in the


creation of the WEB, although it had been incorporated into ACTU policy, accepted by the Labour Council of New South Wales and a number of unions.

Muriel Heagney was dismayed and disappointed with the establishment of the WEB. She maintained that the full male rate should have been awarded and failing that, the onus of proof that this would not happen should have been placed upon the employer. She argued too that the principles of wage determination adopted by the WEB, those of comparative efficiency and absenteeism, were industrial irrelevancies. She defended her position by stating that the regulation was not necessarily correct merely because it emanated from a Labor government. This was a strong indication of her sense of frustration as she was an active member of the Australian Labor Party, but in her opinion, the interests of working women were not its first priority. She remarked to her friend Alf Wallis that when she attempted to broach an issue of importance to women, she began half a mile behind the starting point in a mile race: trade union officials and Labor ministers were generally more difficult to deal with than many large employers of labour. It had been indicated to her that if she placed pressure on employers to accept the principles of equal pay for men's jobs in war industry, some of them would accede graciously rather than


11. Minutes of CAEP Meeting, 21 April 1942. Heagney Papers, MS9106. CAEP Minute Book 1940-1942. Box 1166/1. La Trobe Library.
present a case to the WEB.

Nevertheless, it was not only Heagney who was disappointed with the Labor Government's approach to the equal pay issue. Robert Day, Joint President of the CAEP, expressed the view that the Government would do little to implement equal pay as he was afforded no opportunity to raise the subject at a Manpower Conference in Melbourne in February 1942. He had been unable to move a resolution on equal pay or promote any discussion or elicit any information on the matter. He had been rule "out of order". He foreshadowed a change in CAEP tactics by suggesting that it should concentrate on organising women into trade unions, especially those covering heavy industries, and that the CAEP should continue to fight for equal pay with the unions as delays in the processing of applications for the new wage rates before the Board would be inevitable. Heagney foresaw, too, a change in CAEP tactics, but they would be dependent upon the manner in which the Board operated. The need for propaganda would be displaced by the practical one of implementing equal pay. The regulations intended to preserve differential rates for men and women, so the fight would focus on the issue of the line of demarcation between men's work and women's work previously defined, and on whether that line of demarcation in values should be permitted to continue in the face of the complete elimination of all discrimination between the work that women

12. Letter to Alf Wallis, Secretary, Amalgamated Clothing Trades Union from Muriel Heagney, 2 July 1943. Heagney Papers, MS9106. Correspondence Box 1169/3. La Trobe Library.


14. Minutes of CAEP Meeting, 21 April 1942. Heagney Papers, MS9106. CAEP Minute Book 1940-1942. Box 1166/1. La Trobe Library.
might or might not perform.

Eileen Powell, the other Joint President of the CAEP, and member of the Committee which was involved in consultations with the ACTU Executive and the Government before the establishment of the WEB, adopted a more positive view of the Board. She maintained that this was the first time the principle of equal pay had been recognised. The one hundred per cent had to be paid for the full job and no less than sixty per cent would be payable, an improvement on the fifty-four per cent. Eileen Powell was subsequently seconded to a position in the Commonwealth Government Department of Labour and National Service. Muriel Heagney aspired to such a position, but was unsuccessful. In Heagney's view, however, Powell "sold out" on equal pay and could not understand what the Government hoped to gain from one with such limited experience.

Despite the misgivings of Heagney and others on the establishment of the WEB, Heagney sent telegrams to its members:

Congratulations on your appointment in anticipation that the Women's Employment Board will remove all sex differentials from industrial policy and practice and thus pave the way for the effective organisation of Australia's labour supply for peace and war projects in a manner utterly impossible under existing conditions.

The CAEP indicated that it was willing to assist unions prepare cases before the WEB although it opposed the latter's existence in

15. Minutes of CAEP Meeting, 21 April 1942, op.cit.

16. Ibid.

17. Letter to Alf Wallis from Muriel Heagney, 2 July 1943. Heagney Papers, MS9106. Correspondence Box 1169/2. La Trobe Library.

18. Minutes of CAEP Meeting, 21 April 1942. Heagney Papers, MS9106. CAEP Minute Book 1940-1942. Box 1166/1. La Trobe Library.
principle. Heagney agreed to act as a witness for the Rubber Workers' case in 1942. However, Judge Foster refused to allow the Union advocate to proceed with an examination of Muriel Heagney, who served as a witness on general principles applying to women in industry. At the same time the CAEP was working to secure amendments to the new Bill after the regulation had been disallowed by the Senate in 1942. It wished to substitute the prevailing male rate for the job instead of sixty to one hundred per cent which was specified in the Bill. A new clause was necessary to provide that where inequality was claimed by employers, they had to prove such inequality existed. They were not successful. In January 1942 a strike was called at the Dunlop Rubber Works over equal pay. The employees were persuaded to return to work and the issue was referred to the Commonwealth Arbitration Court.

Heagney agreed to appear as an expert witness on behalf of the CAEP in the Rubber Workers' case.

Heagney was aware that the greatest gains with respect to equal pay had been through direct industrial action by strong unions such as the Victorian Tramways' Union, the Munition Workers' Union, the Bread Carters' Union and the Australian Workers' Union. They all engaged in direct negotiations with employers to secure equal pay during 1942.

Nevertheless, she believed that the CAEP was functioning more strongly

19. Minutes of CAEP Meeting, 15 Sept. 1942. Heagney Papers, MS9106. CAEP Minute Book 1940-1942. Box 1166/1. La Trobe Library.

20. CAEP Circular, 1 Oct. 1942. Heagney Papers, MS9106. CAEP Minute Book 1940-1942. Box 1166/1. La Trobe Library.


than ever in an advisory and co-ordinating capacity, although she mentioned in the 1942 Annual Report that it might appear that the initiative had been taken by the ACTU and the trade unions concerned directly with the problems of women entering men's trades.

As suggested earlier, the existence of the WEB created problems for the CAEP within its organisation, as some members such as Heagney, Day and Woodcock disagreed with the WEB's aims, whereas others saw it as a step in the right direction. For a pressure group to succeed it is crucial that all members agree on a united position on their approach to an issue. The achievement of such unity was a continual problem for the CAEP with its mix of feminist and trade union attitudes to the question. The Executive, and particularly Muriel Heagney, continued to criticise the WEB decisions, as it chose to award eighty-five or ninety per cent of the male rate rather than the one hundred per cent. Munition workers, crane drivers, railway porters, motor mechanics, postwomen, power and hydraulic press operators, storemen and packers, meter readers were awarded ninety per cent, while metal and rubber workers, paper manufacturers, tanners, leather and flax workers were awarded eighty-five per cent of the male rate. Wool classers were granted eighty per cent and post office mechanics seventy-five per cent. Lower productivity and high absentee rates were reasons advanced by the WEB for not granting the full male rate. Heagney's forthright opinion incurred the displeasure of affiliated


delegates who considered the WEB to be the best solution to the problem of women's wages that the Government could produce under the circumstances. Carmel Coleman, the convener of the CAEP Research Commission in 1943 and delegate of the Clerks' Union, recommended that the Council should support the restoration of the WEB as previously constituted when its existence was challenged by the employers in the High Court. Doris Beeby, representative of the Sheet Metal Workers' Union, argued that unions should support the restoration of the Board and submit applications for the one hundred per cent. However, Zillah Bocking, representative of the Australian Teachers' Federation, indicated that the CAEP would be defeating its own purpose by offering unqualified support to the reconstitution of a body that legislated for only a section of women wage-earners; the WEB should function for all women and not only for those replacing men, and the CAEP should not support a body that was only serving a temporary need. Beeby argued that constitutionally the WEB could only make decisions on women replacing men and not for all women. Heagney, too, opposed the acceptance of Coleman's report, believing it to conflict with CAEP policy. Lucy Woodcock, representative of the New South Wales Teachers' Federation and Joint President of the CAEP, stated that if people believed in Labor's plank of full equality for men and women, the CAEP must work towards that goal and not support the re-establishment of the WEB in its original form. Another argument in favour of the WEB in its original form was that equal pay was impossible to achieve under

27. Ibid.
the capitalist system as unequal pay rates were only one of many inequities. It appears that members of the CAEP Executive were more concerned with the principles involved in the issue whereas the supporters of the WEB were more interested in the immediate resolution of the problem, albeit an unsatisfactory one.

As a result of Heagney's opposition to the WEB, her right to occupy the position of Secretary-Treasurer of the CAEP was challenged during 1943 when she was unemployed. She had been defeated as a delegate of the Clerks' Union following a report to the Council of the Clerks' Union by Carmel Coleman, her fellow delegate until April 1943, which criticised the CAEP and took strong exception to statements in publications which criticised the WEB. She stated, also, that delegates were refused the vote at the latest annual meeting. In order to clarify Heagney's position it was agreed that a draft constitution would be submitted to the Annual General Meeting of the CAEP.

Heagney was criticised also for her stand over the Council for Women in War Work (CWWW), which was established in 1943 by Jessie Street, of the United Associations of Women. At the February 1943 meeting of the CAEP Heagney stated that the policy of the CWWW was diametrically opposed to that of the CAEP, and that this point should be emphasised to the unions affiliated with the CAEP. The Council passed a motion requiring unions to be informed that the CAEP was not associated with the CWWW and re-iterating the fact that the CAEP was still pursuing its policy of the rate for the job. The circular which

was distributed to all affiliated unions highlighted the fact that the
CWWW endorsed the decisions of the WEB fixing women's rates at between
sixty to ninety per cent of the male rate for identical jobs. In
addition, the circular rejected again the "gradualistic" policy of the
UAW, so long advocated in opposition to the trade unions. The main
purpose of the circular was to remind the unions that the CAEP com-
prised voting delegates and official observers from the co-operating
trade unions, the fact that it was officially endorsed by the Labour
Council of New South Wales and formally recognised by the ACTU. It
noted that trade union delegates attended the three conferences held
on Women and Children in Industry in Wartime and unions were advised
to be suspicious of the motives of the CWWW as it was affiliated with
the UAW and its reason for existing obscure. The aim was to prevent
the revival of defunct feminist policies. The circular stated that the
CAEP believed that the best safeguard for women as well as men lay in
the concentration of trade union activity on the policy of the rate
for the job and an absolute economic equality for men and women during
wartime and in the post-war period.

At the March 1943 CAEP meeting, Doris Beeby, representative of
the Sheet Metal Workers, strongly criticised the CAEP attitude towards
the CWWW. She argued that it did not support ninety per cent of the
male rate and its activities did not conflict with those of the
CAEP. Heagney's defence was that the basis of opposition to the CWWW
rested upon its affiliation to the UAW which actively pursued a policy

30. CAEP Circular, Information for Trade Unions 1943. Heagney Papers,
MS9106. CAEP Minute Book 1943-1947. Box 1166/2. La Trobe Library.

31. Minutes CAEP Meeting, 16 March 1943. Heagney Papers, MS9106. CAEP
Minute Book 1943-1947. Box 1166/2. La Trobe Library.
in conflict with the CAEP.

Beeby's attitude reflected that of others who were dissatisfied with the CAEP's apparently uncompromising stance on both issues. Supporters of the WEB believed that the Government really wanted to implement equal pay, but was constrained by the wartime emergency and the pegging of wages. Trade unionists and supporters of the ALP felt obliged to support the WEB although they may not have been completely satisfied with its performance. While the employers maintained such pressure against the WEB many of the workers' representatives felt obliged to support its existence.

Heagney's concern that the CWWW might enlist the support of certain trade unions led her to address the New South Wales Labour Council on the question of trade union affiliation with it. The Executive of the Labour Council decided to arrange for a conference of representatives of the CAEP and the CWWW to attempt to find a basis for agreement on policy. Nonetheless, Heagney made a strong plea for the continued recognition of the CAEP as the only body specialising in equal pay matters. A position could otherwise arise, she argued, when both organisations speaking for the trade unions would be advocating opposing policies. Members of the CAEP were responsible to the trade unions.

Delegates from the Ironworkers', Clerks', and Sheet Metal Workers' Unions expressed dissatisfaction with the pamphlet Are Women Paid Men's Rates? They considered it presented an inaccurate statement

32. Minutes of CAEP Meeting, 16 March 1943, op.cit.


34. Ibid.
on the raising of women's wages. They maintained that unions participating in the struggle should provide the data which would then present a more balanced view of the situation. W. Curtin, an affiliate from the Sheet Metal Workers' Union, considered that insufficient credit was accorded to unions which had been in the forefront of the struggle for equal pay, whilst credit was given to those who opposed the entry of women into men's trades. Elliott, the Ironworkers' Union representative suggested the new pamphlet should include a history of the WEB and indicate clearly the part played by those unions which achieved higher rates through the jurisdiction of the WEB. Robert Day, Joint President of the CAEP, attempted to place the WEB in perspective by reminding members that its decisions only applied where women replaced men or were performing work not done by either male or female labour in Australia before the war. The Arbitration Court and State Tribunals were the only avenues open to other women workers and these were restricted by regulations pegging wages at the level existing on 10 February 1943. However, he discerned that some CAEP members felt that the Council's propaganda was not an accurate assessment of the actual situation with reference to equal pay. The decision was made to compile a new pamphlet describing union gains through their applications to the WEB. Those unions would be requested to furnish data to provide an accurate picture of the level of women's wages in the wartime situation.


36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.
As Heagney was responsible for the CAEP correspondence and the compilation of its leaflets, these attacks appeared to be levelled at her specifically. Some of the criticism may have been justified, as it seems that her hostility towards Jessie Street led her to demonstrate undue concern over the activities of the CWWW. While she pursued such questions, there was less time to devote to devising other means of gaining support for equal pay. In spite of criticisms levelled at members of the Executive, the administrators still managed to retain the confidence of a majority of CAEP members.

Despite its internal dissension, the CAEP continued to work to achieve its objective and organised a questionnaire to be sent to all candidates in the 1943 general election, thus following the precedent set in the 1937 and 1940 election campaigns and the 1941 Boothby by-election. It asked each candidate to state whether he or she supported the principle of the rate for the job. The questionnaire was considered to be a useful tactic, providing the opportunity to stress the agitation for equal pay when members of parliament were most receptive to new ideas. However, on this occasion replies were received only from the independent candidates. It was decided to support the ALP if a satisfactory reply was received from the Prime Minister. However this response was not forthcoming, and no action was taken to seek his personal attention or that of other leaders to obtain statements of policy as had occurred previously when the replies of leaders were published prior to the elections.


In April 1943, Heagney, in the capacity of Secretary-Treasurer of the CAEP, wrote to the Prime Minister stating that the problems of industrial unrest were due to employers frustrating the implementation of the WEB decisions. She advised that drastic action was required by the Government as in many workshops three wage rates applied: the women's ninety per cent rate prescribed by the WEB for women replacing men; the male rate prescribed in the Metal Trades Award of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court for process workers which applied to men performing the same work as women; the women's rate of the Metal Trades Award which was being paid by those employers who absolved themselves of the obligation to pay women the WEB rate prescribed for such employees. This situation was resented by both men and women and the High Court Action undertaken by the employers to challenge the legality of the WEB was unsettling; it was difficult to convince the workers that the Government was blameless. Heagney requested that the Government immediately make a statement, setting out its policy and indicating the action to be taken to implement a policy of equal pay. She suggested a regulation which would guarantee that every job upon which men and women were engaged should be paid at the same rate, whilst another should provide for the equalising of all wage rates in accordance with a true conception of the principle of equal pay for the sexes. She contended that if the principle of equal pay was made mandatory by regulation, or legislation, the issue would be resolved. The Prime Minister's reply indicated that the Government would take no action with regard to women's wages and the WEB until

40. Letter to the Prime Minister, John Curtin, from Muriel Heagney, Hon. Secretary CAEP, 1 June 1943. Heagney Papers, MS9106. Correspondence Box 1168/4. La Trobe Library.
the decision of the High Court was brought down in respect to the issue raised by the employers.

In order to maintain the pressure on the ALP, the CAEP sent telegrams to the President, Secretary and delegates to the ALP Conference held in Canberra in December 1943, requesting action to ensure the implementation of the policy of equal pay for the sexes. This tactic yielded little except a re-affirmation of the policy of equal pay for the sexes already embodied in the ALP policy and platform.

Assistance was sought from the CAEP by the South Australian and the Victorian Teachers' Unions in claims for equal pay. They requested information which was forwarded to the respective unions. However, by the end of 1943, Heagney considered that there was no longer the same enthusiasm in the campaign for equal pay as in 1942 when the national conscience was stimulated by fear of invasion and the labour of all women was a necessary factor in defence, a fact recognised by those in power.

As part of its strategy to keep the issue of equal pay uppermost in the minds of trade unionists, the CAEP held its Fourth Conference of Women and Children in Industry in Wartime on 18 March 1944. At this conference delegates from interested unions reported on the progress made on the equal pay issue in their respective organisations. Jennie Bremner has argued that Heagney and the CAEP ignored the plight of


43. Minutes of CAEP Meeting, 16 Nov. 1943. Heagney Papers, MS9106. CAEP Minute Book 1943-1947. Box 1166/2. La Trobe Library.
women working for low wages in the female dominated industries. A closer examination of the evidence demonstrates that this was not the case. The opening address of this conference noted that the agitation for equal pay was moving from the "male" industries to the traditional women's occupations such as textiles, clothing, food production and services, nursing, teaching and clerical work which were equally valuable in a war economy. These industries became "vital" after Australia entered into a lend-lease agreement with the United States in 1943 after the arrival of the US Forces in the Pacific. Australia was to produce food, clothing, stores and provisions while the Americans provided most of the munitions and heavy materials. Women, however, were reluctant to work in areas which paid such low rates of pay. A.W. Thompson, the Milk and Ice Carters' Union delegate reported that his union was one of the first to secure recognition of the rate for the job, which was achieved by direct negotiations. However delegates consistently referred to the problem of the lack of co-operation and support by women workers themselves in pursuit of equal pay. Thompson contended that an inferiority complex demonstrated by many women was the major drawback in the campaign of equality of the sexes. Robert Day expanded on this point by stating that the difficulty was the lack of trade union organisation among women, in addition to the fact that

44. Bremner, "In the Cause of Equality" in Bevege, James and Shute (eds), Worth Her Salt, p.294


46. Beaton, "The Importance of Women's Paid Labour" in Bevege, James and Shute (eds), Worth Her Salt, p.91.

47. Minutes of Fourth Conference of Women and Children in Industry in Wartime, March 1944, op.cit.
the WEB placed great emphasis upon absenteeism among women workers. He had argued for equal pay for females in the Rubber Workers' Union before the WEB. An Amalgamated Clothing Trades Union delegate, E. Cartwright, supported this view. Her belief was that as women became more effective unionists their wages and conditions would improve more quickly. This fact was recognised by labour activists such as Sara Lewis, Ellen Mulcahy and Minnie Felstead earlier in the century who encouraged women to form their own unions and become industrially organised.

F. La Motte, representative of the Food Preserving Trades Union, referred to the lack of co-operation of some women workers. Those who were transferred to the fruit canning industry by manpower refused to co-operate with their fellow workers in that trade to secure improved rates and conditions for themselves and others, but merely absented themselves and left valuable food to rot and waste.

A picture emerges of women workers not prepared to participate in the struggle for equal pay, thereby creating further difficulties for those who were committed to the achievement of the rate for the job. This problem had been noted earlier by members of the CAEP when women in the public service refused to sign the petition for equal pay for fear of losing their jobs. The CAEP's first leaflet focussed on this


51. Minutes of CAEP Meeting, April 1938. Heagney Papers MS9106. CAEP Minute Box 1165/3. La Trobe Library.
question. However, not all female workers were unco-operative as J. O'Grady, representative of the Australian Tramways Union, New South Wales Branch reported that women in tramways received the full male rate of pay and were subject to identical conditions. The eleven hundred women in the service in New South Wales were good unionists and satisfactory workers. The New South Wales Nurses' Association delegate, J. Angus Murray reported that nurses were realising the importance of being well-organised industrially in order to achieve improved pay and conditions. An improvement in the economic status of nurses would result in a higher quality nursing service which would benefit both patient and worker.

The complaints of the union representatives are not supported by statistics which demonstrate that many women joined unions during the war period. Female clothing workers' union membership in New South Wales rose from sixty per cent in 1939 to eighty per cent in 1944/5. By 1943, women constituted twenty per cent of the membership of the Sheet Metal Workers' Union. Female union membership increased from 32.8 per cent of the total female workforce in 1939, to 51.9 per cent in 1945, while male membership moved from 51.6 to 54.9 per cent in the same period. Women did initiate industrial action to gain higher

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52. Can Women Hold Their Place in Industry? CAEP Pamphlet no.1.
54. Ibid.
56. Curlewis, Women and Wages in the War Years, 1940-1945, p.9.
57. Beaton, "The Importance of Women's Paid Labour" in Bevege, James and Shute (eds), Worth Her Salt, p.94.
wages. Two thousand five hundred textile workers, a majority of them women, went on strike in August 1944 in defiance of their union, in which all officials were male. Muriel Heagney reported in her log, when organiser for the Amalgamated Engineering Union, many instances of stoppages over wage rates. The chief source of discontent was the different wage levels operating for similar work administered by different awards. In one dispute, females on the comb benches threatened reduction in output on benches of sixty per cent of the male output unless rates were equalised.

Although women were criticised for not contributing sufficiently to the equal pay struggle, there was no attempt to explain or understand such attitudes. The CAEP addressed this issue early in its existence, but did not appear to place great emphasis upon it in subsequent years. This was an area in which further education could have engendered greater support for the aim of equal pay, as many women accepted the notion that the men were the breadwinners, entitled to a higher rate of pay than female workers. Perhaps some women felt that little support would be forthcoming from male union officials. The results of Gallup Polls published during the war years, however, indicated increasing support for equal pay, but for a range of reasons. In 1941 it was reported that six out of ten people favoured equal pay for men and women performing identical tasks. The reasons the respondents advanced were that "you pay for the work, not the sex of a person", "that equal pay was needed to safeguard men's jobs". People made it


59. Muriel Heagney Log, p.29. Heagney Papers, MS9106, Box 1159/4(a). La Trobe Library.
clear that the work that women did had to be "as good as a man's". Those who favoured paying women only two-thirds or three quarters of the male rate stated that men usually had dependants or that women's standard of work was not as high as men's. The 1944 Gallup Poll on the same question recorded that three out of four people favoured receiving equal pay. The question posed was: "If a woman is doing much the same work as a man, should she be paid the same wage - or less?" The reasons advanced for those in favour were that the work is paid for, not the sex; that equal pay would prevent the exploitation of female labour; that it would safeguard men's jobs; that it would force women back to the home. The opponents of equal pay claimed that women were physically incapable of performing the same work as a man, but the most common reply was that women rarely had the same responsibilities as men. Another argument propounded was that women on equal pay would not marry. Each person opposed to equal pay was asked: "How much of a man's wage should she get?" Answers centred around seventy per cent. Therefore a strongly co-ordinated education program may have increased community support for equal pay.

The conference concluded with a resolution to be forwarded to the Prime Minister, requesting the Federal Government to legislate for the removal of sex differentials. Simmons, a delegate from the New South Wales Executive of the ALP confirmed that the Labor Government recognised the valuable services of women, but pointed out difficulties in achieving equal pay when private enterprise became the major factor in

60. *Courier-Mail*, 9 Sept. 1941.


control of productive agencies. This was a fairly limp argument in view of the fact that the Government, as a large employer of women, did not award equal pay to any of them.

The Conference was deemed a success, despite the opposition of some unions to the CAEP's insistence on the rate for the job which was reflected in withdrawals from the Council. The Sheet Metal Workers' Union left in February 1944. The Telephone Officers' and Bank Officers' Associations withdrew officially in April and May of the same year. Neither the Ironmakers' nor the Clerks' Union were represented. The Secretary of the Clerks' Union sent a written explanation stating that it was unable to send a delegate as all Executive Officers were on official business. These absences were balanced by representatives from the Amalgamated Engineering Union, the Federated Moulders' Union, the Food Preservers' Union and the Australian Tramways' Association. However, the Moulders' Union delegate, J. Hooke, asserted that "Ironfounders do not consider a foundry a suitable place for women workers."

As the outcome of the Second World War seemed assured and males were resuming positions in the civilian workforce, the impetus for equal pay faltered and devices were used in many cases to avoid


64. Minutes of CAEP Meeting, February 1944. Heagney Papers, MS9106. CAEP Minute Book 1943-1947. Box 1166/2. La Trobe Library.


67. Ibid.
awarding equal pay rates. Postwomen were not to be allocated the same weight to carry as postmen, therefore, they could be paid at a lower rate. In the printing industry jobs performed by women replacing men in certain shops had been done by women in other shops for years. The benefits of the WEB were diminishing as women were transferred to lower rates and agreed to them rather than being man-powered into unpleasant work. The WEB was disbanded in October 1944 with the responsibility for women in industry reverting to the Commonwealth Arbitration Court. The WEB had determined the wages of between eighty and ninety thousand women out of a total of 800,000 employed women. It awarded the full male rate to nine categories of employment.

Nevertheless, the Government was unable to attract women into the so-called "vital" industries of food processing, textile manufacturing, boot and shoe making, and so ultimately gazetted a seventy-five per cent women's rate under the authority of its National Security Regulations. The Arbitration Court had refused to consider increasing women's wages, and so the Government resorted to the means that had been always possible, the method that the CAEP had recommended. The problem was it awarded seventy-five per cent rather than the one hundred per cent and only in specific industries. It was also designed as a temporary measure.

68. Minutes of CAEP Meeting, 16 May 1944. Heagney Papers, MS9106. CAEP Minute Book 1943-1947. Box 1166/2. La Trobe Library.
69. Ibid.
70. Lamour, "Women's Wages and the WEB" in Bevege, James and Shute (eds), Worth Her Salt, p.55.
71. Curlewis, Women and Wages in the War Years 1940-1945, p.9.
72. Beaton, "The Importance of Women's Paid Labour" in Bevege, James and Shute (eds), op.cit., p.75.
By the end of 1944 the CAEP was further away from the achievement of its aim than it was in 1941. The war had not provided the opportunity to achieve equal pay, as women's entry into previously designated "male" jobs was to be a temporary aberration in the history of the Australian workforce. The WEB was to ensure that this was the case. The CAEP had attempted to meet the challenge of the WEB while still concentrating on persuading the Government to legislate for equal pay as it was well aware of the narrow scope of the Board. Nevertheless, the differing attitudes towards its existence were reflected in the Council's delegates: those conscious that the WEB was instigated by a Labor Government, and aware of the strong opposition demonstrated by employers, were prepared to accept it as the best that could be achieved under the circumstances. The feminists in the labour movement, however, were aware that once the sex-segregation of the workforce was maintained, and wage rates for women adjusted merely for the duration of the war, the fight for equal pay suffered a serious setback. Muriel Heagney felt no compulsion to support the WEB merely because it was the creation of a Labor administration. The differing views within the CAEP made it difficult for the organisation to commit all its energies to the achievement of its goals. The male dominated unions such as the Sheet Metal Workers' expressed satisfaction with the WEB, and withdrew their support from the CAEP, thus weakening its resources.

The CAEP's concern to dissociate itself from the CWWW was another source of disagreement within the organisation which served to diminish its influence. Nonetheless, it still held successful conferences on Women and Children in Industry in Wartime, which continued to draw
attention to the equal pay issue.

Nevertheless, it was natural for Muriel Heagney to feel that she had been betrayed by the labour movement as a whole. Once again, the needs of women workers were to occupy second place in the concerns of trade unionists and the majority of the Government. Muriel Heagney was not heeded. She was to continue the fight with much less energy, as the forces arrayed against her were overwhelming, although she was a personality not to be dismissed lightly. The following chapter charts the demise of the CAEP and attempts to assess Muriel Heagney's influence, at the same time putting into perspective the stance of those who had opposed the realisation of the goal of full equal pay.
CHAPTER 4

THE END OF THE CAEP: SOME EXPLANATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

In the last years of its existence, the CAEP was to persevere with the same tactics it had employed from its inception, although it was acutely aware of waning interest in the issue. Muriel Heagney and the CAEP had been fighting against the odds. Although it appeared at times that success might be imminent, victory would then be snatched from them. Muriel Heagney was undoubtedly the strength of the organisation drawing some of her resolution, perhaps, from an apparent lack of appreciation of the full extent of the opposition to equal pay, despite the superficial support it was accorded by the labour movement. She had worked in union organisations all her adult life and was inspired by her commitment to the cause of equal opportunity for women, especially equal pay. Her own dedication to her ideal caused her to push ahead with resolution in the face of discouragement, less than realistic in some of her hopes and not prepared to admit that community support was not really forthcoming.

The CAEP's reaction to the waning interest in the issue was to increase the publicity on the question by disseminating large numbers of CAEP publications to organising committees concerned with women's political and industrial problems. It continued to hold meetings but less regularly. By 1945 the Eighth Annual Report of the CAEP reitiated the need to continue the struggle for equal pay as wartime industry was decreasing and women were forced to accept lower wages. The report stated:
The avalanche of woman power crashing down on the predo-
minently male employing industries that appeared so formi-
dable in 1942 has proved merely a giant snowball that is
fast disappearing under the early morning rays of the post-
war sun. 1

Reference was made again to the fact that the women themselves were
disorganised or indifferent to their advantage if paid the full male
rate and their lack of interest was one of the reasons why equal pay
had not been achieved. Nonetheless it was agreed that the work of
the CAEP was sufficiently important for it to continue. Attendances at
monthly meetings, however, had decreased dramatically; only six were
present at the September 1945 meeting, with no new initiatives being
taken for the remainder of the year. Ten attended the September 1947
meeting.

Meetings were held at irregular intervals during 1946 and 1947
owing to clashes with other meetings and the illness of the Secre-
tary. Eleven were at the October 1947 meeting. Fourteen unions paid
their affiliation fees for 1946-1947. Among them were the Amalgamated
Engineering Union – Commonwealth Council, the Clothing and Allied
Trades Union of Australia – Federal Council, the Textile Workers,

La Trobe Library.

2. Ibid.

CAEP Minute Book, 1943-1947. Box 1166/2. La Trobe Library.

CAEP Minute Book, 1943-1947. Box 1166/2. La Trobe Library.

CAEP Minute Book, 1943-1947. Box 1166/2. La Trobe Library.

CAEP Minute Book, 1943-1947. Box 1166/2. La Trobe Library.
Rubber Workers, New South Wales Teachers' Federation, Printing Trades, Hairdressers and Wigmakers, Amalgamated Postal Workers, Electrical Trades, Transport Workers, Miscellaneous Workers, Milk and Ice-Carters. The majority of these unions had been initial members of the CAEP. It was obvious that the CAEP's influence within the trade union organisations was declining, when in 1942 it could list fifty-three affiliated organisations.

The Council called a Special Conference on "Current Unequal Wages for Women" in November 1946. Two aspects of the problem of equal pay were to be considered. The first was the proposition for raising women's wages to the same level as those of men taking as a base the job itself where rates were already fixed for men doing the same work and the necessary adjustments in the traditional women's industries, where large profits were made from the poorly paid labour of women and girls. The second aspect was the establishment of a constituted authority within the trade union movement to specialise on questions of wages, training, placement, status, organisation and representation of women in trade unions. Therefore the struggle to ensure women's issues were accorded the priority they deserved in the trade unions was to continue.

In prepared notes for the conference, Heagney stated that apart from the employers, the CAEP's main opponents were the UAW and the CWWM, a surprising remark considering that these organisations sup-


ported equal pay, but disagreed with the CAEP on the most effective means of securing it. Jessie Street and the UAW had supported the WEB because the principle of equal pay had been recognised, though it was rarely applied.

The CAEP's Ninth Annual Report recorded that men were ousting women from most jobs carrying the WEB rates of from eighty-five to one hundred per cent. Employers were keeping a nucleus of women in such work to facilitate extensions later at female rates of pay, if their post-war plans were to succeed. It was noted that a co-ordinated campaign was in full swing to eradicate all wage increases and satisfactory working conditions that were forced on employers by the Federal Labor Government to meet war production requirements. The solution to the problem was still seen to be legislation to prevent sex discrimination in wage rates as the Arbitration Court was never going to award equal pay.

By late 1947, the CAEP was still considering means by which equal pay could be implemented. It was recorded at the Tenth Annual General Meeting that a deputation of ten people waited upon the State Minister for Labour who promised to submit the report to the Premier but expressed the view that equal pay would be difficult to introduce in addition to the forty-hour week and two weeks annual leave. It is

9. CAEP Notes for the Information of Delegates, *op.cit*.


interesting to note at this stage that Muriel Heagney believed that direct action by some strong union would ultimately focus attention on the problem. Other delegates questioned the wisdom of direct action, urging the unifying of forces within the movement. This was going to prove to be a difficult task as mention had been made in the CAEP Tenth Annual Report of attempts by Jessie Street to withdraw the support of trade unions from the CAEP. Nonetheless, the recommendation was made for the three committees dealing with equal pay, the Labour Council Equal Pay Committee, which had just been established, the Trade Union Equal Pay Committee and the CAEP to hold a meeting to discuss common policy and action. Heagney was allotted the task of arranging such an assembly. She was not prepared to take this action and requested Robert Day, Joint President of the CAEP to approach the Labour Council through his union as she was not confident that a direct approach from the CAEP would achieve a positive result.

Muriel Heagney forgot to call a meeting for February 1948, and so the CAEP lapsed without having achieved its aim. The CAEP in terms of its declared aim of the "rate for the job" regardless of sex did not succeed. It remains now for the question of why it did not realise its goal to be more fully investigated. It could be argued, however, that the pressure the organisation applied to the Government, the Arbi-

the unions and indirectly to private employers led ultimately to the award of seventy-five per cent of the male rate granted to women in the Basic Wage Inquiry in 1949. This amount represented an improvement on the fifty-four per cent which had been the accepted rate for female workers. Nevertheless, the CAEP was not interested in partial success when it believed it enjoyed the support of the ALP, the large unions and was confident of achieving its aim.

As a pressure group, the CAEP adopted traditional tactics such as attempting to send delegations to both state and federal governments, providing the Prime Minister and Senior Ministers with information and argument on the equal pay issue and requesting the governments to legislate for its implementation. Simultaneously, it encouraged individual unions to negotiate for equal pay with their respective employers. It provided assistance to unions presenting cases to the Arbitration Court in terms of evidence and witnesses. As a single issue pressure group it was consistent in its preparedness to attend functions which related to the equal pay question. There was no doubt a practical reason for enforcing this policy. The CAEP was a voluntary organisation, relying upon members to devote hours of their spare time to the cause, as all were in full-time paid employment. Therefore, none of them had unlimited time to spend on the CAEP's work.

It was obvious, then, that the CAEP did not enjoy access to large financial resources; otherwise it surely would have employed a full-time Secretary/Treasurer. It depended, however, on the voluntary


services of Muriel Heagney and other members of the Executive who
devoted many hours to the cause. The execution of policy was left in the
hands of those who could afford the time and it was Muriel Heagney who
accepted the major responsibility for implementing CAEP decisions.
This circumstance allowed the organisation to become the vehicle
through which Heagney could express and implement her ideas on the
most effective means of securing equal pay. Her experience in the la-
bour movement made her acutely aware of the conditions under which
women laboured. She was therefore concerned to improve their economic
position by the attainment of equal pay. Her class perspective meant
that she was committed to realising her aims within the labour move-
ment, being sceptical of the ability of middle-class women's organis-
ations to understand the needs of those in paid employment, despite
the attitude of the majority of men in the labour movement to issues
which women considered deserved priority. Nonetheless, Jessie Street,
by Muriel Heagney's description, a middle-class feminist, although she
was a member of the ALP and called herself a socialist, recognised the
need for feminists to co-operate with working women in order to gain
equal pay. This requirement was cited as the reason why the UAW affi-
liated with the CAEP.

Heagney, as the major spokesperson for the CAEP, was both an asset
and a liability. She came to the Equal Pay Council at fifty-two years
of age with considerable experience in the industrial arena. She
commanded respect and influence with her contacts in the labour organ-
isation no doubt assisting in the establishment of the CAEP and its
acceptance by a number of trade unions and the ACTU. Nevertheless,

her own prejudices were reflected in CAEP policy, particularly with regard to Jessie Street, the UAW and the CWWW. She obviously believed that her influence in labour circles would assist in the goal of equal pay being achieved. Unfortunately, she was to suffer the fate of other women in the labour movement who did not know their place and who attempted to put issues which assumed great importance for women high on the list of trade union priorities. Her efforts were in vain and ultimately the labour movement failed to meet her expectations. Her unpreparedness to compromise her aims in addition to her forthright criticism of the Labor Government's actions, did not endear her to senior members of the ALP. She was highly critical of the WEB which caused conflict with other members of the CAEP. Ultimately, she was to be disillusioned with members of the labour movement over the question of equal pay.

It was apparent that the union movement would continue to act in the interests of its male workers, and where the needs of men and women employees diverged, the unions would support their male members while women were still considered to be of secondary importance in the labour force. In addition, it was important to realise that the Government, on which Heagney and the CAEP relied to implement equal pay, was a major employer of women and would not grant equal pay unless it was compelled to meet the request. It was surprising then, to read that the UAW and CWWW were the CAEP's major opponents, when Heagney stated that the Melbourne Trades Hall Council was full of reactionaries. In a letter to L. Wickham, Secretary of the Commonwealth

20. Letter to J.A. Cranwell, President, Council of AEU from Muriel Heagney, 30 Jan. 1943. Heagney Papers, MS9106. Correspondence Box 1169/1. La Trobe Library.
Council of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, thanking them for the union's purchase of 10,000 copies of the pamphlet, *Are Women Paid Men's Rates?*, she remarked that such an acquisition was most appreciated by a movement which had to struggle against a lack of understanding and a true appreciation of the basic realities of equal pay in trade union circles in addition to the legislative sphere. It was the Labor Government which had instituted the WEB to which she was opposed. Therefore Heagney was fully aware of the identity of the CAEP's enemies.

Some inconsistencies can be detected in Heagney's attitude to the WEB. In correspondence with May Brodney, a long-time colleague in the labour movement, she stated that the WEB had "passed into oblivion without making any very tangible contribution to the recognition of sex equality in economic matters." Heagney could never understand why the WEB "with full authority to decide one hundred per cent persistently refuses to do so".

To us it looks as if the "ship" has gotten stuck on a reef of 85 or 90% of the charted course clearly marked 100% and that some one will have to get her back on to her true course. 23

She re-iterated her criticism in a letter to the Secretary of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, stating that she agreed with the contention that "ninety per cent is no more equitable than fifty-four per

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22. Letter to Mary Brodney from Muriel Heagney, 24 Oct. 1944. Heagney Papers, MS9106. Correspondence Box 1169/2. La Trobe Library.

23. Letter to Hon. D.L. MacNamara, MLC. General Secretary ALP Trades Hall Council, Melbourne, 3 Jan. 1943. Heagney Papers, MS9106. Correspondence Box 1169/1. La Trobe Library.
cent since it is based on a sex differential grounded on prejudice and
tradition and is iniquitous." Yet, in an interview for the New York
Times her attitude appeared to have mellowed somewhat:

The Board has been effective in the actual enforcement of
approximately equal rates for women, and has had a re-
markable opportunity of demonstrating that women can do
men's work equally as well as men and at the same time
conforming to normal workshop conditions. 25

Nonetheless, she did criticise the fact that it persisted in its dis-
crimination on the grounds of sex. It would appear, however, that
this statement was the most positive that Heagney had volunteered on
the WEB. Perhaps she wished to present a more constructive picture to
an American newspaper, or appear more reasonable in her opinion of the
body as union support for the CAEP was waning, with many opting to
discontinue their affiliation. By 1944 twenty-one unions still main-
tained their affiliation with the CAEP out of the original fifty-
three.

Muriel Heagney had incurred the displeasure of Carmel Coleman, a
delegate of the Federated Clerks' Union, when the CAEP criticised the
WEB decisions during 1943. Coleman articulated her criticisms of the
CAEP in a report to the Clerks' Union Council. She maintained that the
purist attitude adopted by the CAEP appeared unrealistic. Discussions

25. Letter to Muriel Heagney from Kathleen M. Cummins, including
copy of interview, 3 Feb. 1944. Heagney Papers, MS9106.
Correspondence Box 1169/1. La Trobe Library.
26. Ibid.
27. List of affiliated unions with their appointed delegates. Heag-
ney Papers, MS9106. Correspondence Box 1169/4. La Trobe Library.
at meetings were hampered by "Utopian Ideology" and members were unable to recognise advances made in the employment of women in industry as they were not always one hundred per cent. She feared that statements published by the Council would lead to friction between the trade unions and the Government. She described the CAEP as

...only a limited publicity agency. Were it a fighting organisation assisting by co-ordinating all attempts of affiliated unions to advance the status of women, making available to all, the experiences gained by the few the Council would...become really active in the struggle for equality of the sexes. 29

It was Carmel Coleman who questioned Muriel Heagney's eligibility to remain as Secretary-Treasurer once she had been replaced as a Clerks' Union delegate. Therefore, those wishing to encourage the CAEP to adopt a more reasonable approach to the achievement of equal pay saw Heagney as the major obstacle and attacked her both directly and indirectly.

Nonetheless, an alternative view of the achievability of "the rate for the job" might be that it was not an unrealistic aim as some women were being paid the full male rate. Therefore it was logical to apply the principle universally. The CAEP was consistent in attempting to realise this aim and Muriel Heagney must be awarded credit for her singleness of purpose in pursuit of the goal. The CAEP was not obliged to support the WEB merely because it was established by the Labor Government. As an employer, the Government did not intend to legislate for equal pay. The concept of the WEB did not fit "the rate

28. Report of delegates to the CAEP to the Federated Clerks' Union of Australia, N.S.W. Branch, at Central Council Meeting, April 17-18 1943. Heagney Papers, MS9106. Correspondence Box 1169/1. La Trobe Library.

29. Ibid.
for the job' principle, as the onus was on the employee to prove that a woman worker could perform a job as well as a man. The CAEP position was logical when it argued that such a Board was unnecessary when the Government could have legislated for equal pay under the Security Regulations. The existence of the WEB meant that any rise in women's wages in those industries under the jurisdiction of the WEB would be temporary. The CAEP was interested in permanent gains. Therefore it was difficult to see how the CAEP could have supported the existence of the WEB; perhaps it could have been less strident in its criticism and concentrated on achieving "the rate for the job" in occupations not covered by the WEB through direct negotiations with employers.

As an active member of the ALP and a friend of John Curtin, the Prime Minister, it might be assumed that Muriel Heagney had the potential to wield some influence with the Labor Government. Heagney corresponded formally with the Prime Minister in her capacity as Secretary of the CAEP, sending him resolutions which had been passed by the Council and keeping him informed of the activities of the CAEP. She corresponded with him when she travelled to the United States in October 1941 and sent him a report of her visit. Although his Government did not assist the CAEP in the realisation of its aims, the Council recorded its sorrow at his death in July 1945, stating that it had lost a good friend. However, in 1942, he was unable to assist


Muriel Heagney in her search for a position after the Government decided to close the Queensland Government Tourist Bureau in May 1942, where she had been employed for six and a half years. She wrote to him as "an old friend who by chance happens to be the Prime Minister". She requested a position in the Department of Industry and National Service or the Manpower Department as she considered she was qualified to undertake work in either area. If no suitable position was available in those two Departments, she indicated that she was prepared to accept a transport position, where she could relieve a man for other duties. However, she was not sure that her letter would reach the Prime Minister as she stated that perhaps his private secretary might feel her letter "much too unimportant to show you but if that should happen it is just my bad luck". Her request was submitted to the Minister for Labour and National Service, Eddie Ward. She was ultimately informed that no suitable position was available. In a letter to the Prime Minister she expressed her disappointment:

There now appears nothing left for me except to resign myself to the inevitable and recognise the fact that the present administration of Labour and National Service have no use for me. I cannot, however, find any trace of open hostility to me except from the 'Com's' and there is a general acceptance of the fact that I have special qualifications.


33. Ibid.

34. Letter to Muriel Heagney from Eddie Ward, Minister for Labour and National Service, June 1942. Heagney Papers, MS9106. Correspondence Box 1168/2. La Trobe Library.

The Joint Presidents of the CAEP, Robert Day and Lucy Woodcock, had written to the Prime Minister, drawing his attention to Muriel Heagney's skills which could be utilised by the Government. Their efforts were unsuccessful. By 1943 Heagney was employed as an organiser with the Amalgamated Engineering Union. She had been unemployed for a year. In an interview with the Sydney Sunday Telegraph Heagney stated that during that time the New South Wales Public Service Board had offered her routine clerical jobs at rates of pay ranging from £2-13-6 to £3-10-0 per week. The Federal Public Service Inspector proposed a position in the rationing department at £3-7-0 per week when she had been earning £5-15-0 per week plus a business allowance with the Queensland Tourist Bureau in her capacity as publicity officer. The Women's Section of the National Service Bureau informed her that she was "unemployable" in factories, claiming that they would not engage anybody without experience over the age of 40.

The Sunday Telegraph article listed her credentials as an organiser, lecturer, union advocate and publicity officer. Attention was drawn to her long involvement with labour politics and the industrial movement and the fact that she was sufficiently well-known to Labor politicians, including the Prime Minister, to call them by their Christian names and for them to call her Muriel. She was quoted as saying,


But I don't want to get a job just because of my association with the Labor movement, but honestly by relying on my capacity to hold it down. 38

Therefore, the Prime Minister was either unable or unprepared to assist Muriel Heagney in her search for a suitable position within the bureaucracy. Admittedly her age may have been a disadvantage, as she was fifty-seven by this stage. Nonetheless, it was patently obvious that neither her friendship with the Prime Minister nor her active involvement in the labour cause allowed her to enjoy any advantage. No "job for the girl" was forthcoming. As an advocate of equal pay she was granted no access to the ear of Government. It was evident that the Prime Minister heeded the advice of his department rather than that of Heagney and the CAEP. The equal pay body was not consulted before the establishment of the WEB. The senior members of the bureaucracy dealt peremptorily with the organisation and conveyed the impression that they disliked Heagney. Obviously the Government decided that it could put aside CAEP demands without incurring any political cost. Perhaps it realised ultimately that Heagney and the CAEP would not create difficulties for a Labor Government; her loyalty could always be relied upon.

Despite continued disappointments, Heagney expressed faith in the ultimate righteousness of the cause and therefore believed that they would succeed "in the long run. Here's hoping the run will not be too long." She advanced a more practical reason earlier in 1943 for


39. Correspondence previously cited which was sent to Heagney conveyed this impression.

40. Letter to Alf Wallis from Muriel Heagney, 2 July 1943. Heagney Papers, MS9106. Correspondence Box 1169/3. La Trobe Library.
ultimate success:

We must win in the end as we have several of the strongest unions including the Amalgamated Engineering Union, the Rubber Workers' Union, the Leather Trades with us. 41

She was endeavouring to convince herself that equal pay would be achieved, although she was aware of the resistance of the Victorian unions to the issue. With her extensive experience in both the political and industrial wings of the labour movement, she was painfully aware of its reluctance to allow women to occupy positions of authority and to tackle women workers issues seriously. Her dedication and fortitude were admirable, particularly with regard to the equal pay question, as she had been associated with that cause since at least 1913.

It was apparent then, that the CAEP was unable to enlist the cooperation of unions in other states. This factor was to limit its influence and finances. The fact that the CAEP did not establish branches in all states meant that its funds were never large and its reliance on voluntary labour limited its capacity to act. This allowed one person to dominate the organisation. Perhaps Muriel Heagney's prejudices warranted some modification. Her attitude to Jessie Street, the UAW and the CWWS is an example. For someone who referred constantly to the fact that the CAEP relied purely on voluntary labour and

41. Letter to F.P. Gillespie, Secretary, Town Hall Employees' Union, Trades Hall Council, Melbourne, from Muriel Heagney, 3 Jan. 1943. Heagney Papers, MS9106. Correspondence Box 1169/1. La Trobe Library.

42. Letter to the Hon. D.L. MacNamara, MLC, General Secretary, ALP, Trades Hall Council, 3 Jan. 1943. Heagney Papers, MS9106. Correspondence Box 1169/1. La Trobe Library.

43. She attended the Women's Trade Union Convention of 1913 which attempted to pass a resolution in favour of equal pay.
that she was struggling to answer all offers of assistance, Heagney
devoted considerable time to attempting to discredit the CWW in the
eyes of the unions with the circular that was issued to those affi-
liliated with the CAEP. To brand the UAW and the CWW as the CAEP's
major opponents, apart from the employers, was extreme. On face value
one could argue that Heagney's class loyalty overrode her feminist
ideals, and that she was conforming to the tradition of nineteenth and
twentieth-century socialist feminists who would have little or even
nothing to do with middle-class feminists. Nevertheless, personal
rivalry and jealousy may have been a factor. In her autobiography,
Jessie Street mentioned her friendship with John Curtin and the fact
that she had been entertained by him and his wife after the 1943
elections when Jessie stood as a Labor candidate for Wentworth,
N.S.W., and performed creditably. She praised the Curtin Government
generously for its contribution to the improvement of women's wages.
The Curtin Administration appointed the WEB, and made the first com-
parative study in Australia of the same work performed under similar
conditions by men and women. It reported that though the performance
of each individual man and woman worker differed, the amount and the
quality of the work depended on the individual and not the sex of the
worker. She argued that though the Board had recommended equal pay for
the sexes, owing to the opposition of employers and lack of support by
the men trade unionists, the women's pay was advanced to no more than

44. For the French situation see Sowerwine, Sisters or Citizens? 
Women and Socialism in France since 1876. Cambridge University

45. Street, Truth or Repose, p.337.
ninety per cent of the male rate. The women had accepted this level of payment as it was a considerable advance upon the fifty-four per cent they had been receiving. She stated too that the WEB recommendation had established a firm basis "for our continuing the struggle for equal pay and equal opportunity."

Jessie Street was active not only on the issue of equal pay, and so received attention from the media and the Government. She was involved in a broad range of matters, such as the problem of venereal disease and the registration of prostitutes and the Australian Women's Charter. Jessie Street made reference to the half-hearted support the unions offered in favour of equal pay and of course the implacable opposition of the employers.

Despite disagreements within the CAEP, Heagney managed to maintain her authority, but at the expense of the organisation itself. It became increasingly isolated as the basis of its support, the unions, no longer saw any practical value in supporting the equal pay cause.

The CAEP as an organisation did not appear to deal directly with private employers; it left negotiations to individual unions and provided them with up-to-date information when required. The employers were a powerful group in terms of money and influence and they were not prepared to accept the implementation of equal pay, although it was an established practice in industries that were generally designated to be "male". Equal pay was really not such a radical proposal


47. Ibid., p.250.

48. Ibid., p.324.
as it was established in the professions. Doctors and lawyers in private practice would not charge different rates, depending on whether they were male or female. Journalists had gained equal pay. However, female teachers were paid only four-fifths of the male rate. Nevertheless, an article in the Manufacturer, a Sydney business journal, made the point that the issue of equal pay "strikes at the very foundations of that structure which we call Australia's system of Industrial Arbitration." This system evolved from and developed upon the basic principle that industry was to pay a wage which was sufficient to meet the needs of the family unit - that unit being taken as a man, his wife and one child. It maintained that a departure from this principle would be "profoundly revolutionary in character." So revolutionary in character, indeed, that the whole question demanded the most careful consideration, not only of Industry's present position, but also of its position in the very uncertain tomorrow. The writer patronisingly acknowledged woman's contribution to the workforce, even commenting on her demonstrated "superiority" in "monotonous" jobs and those requiring dexterity and neatness. Nonetheless, the major consideration about a woman worker was clear:

Her relatively inferior physical strength and endurance, must, however, inevitably preclude her from seriously competing with man in the really strenuous work of the world. 51

Employers were encouraged to study the matter in detail and the

49. Letter to J.A. Lyons, Prime Minister, from George Weir and Muriel Heagney, Joint Presidents CAEP, 30 Sept. 1937. A461, Q351/1/1 Pt I. Australian Archives, A.C.T.

50. The Manufacturer, 13 Sept. 1941.

51. Ibid.
article concluded with the following sentence in italics:

The question, in fact, may well be regarded as one of the most vital which - during the past quarter of a century - has arisen in connection with the development of manufacturing industries within this young Commonwealth. 52

This article was written with the knowledge that the ACTU was to apply to the Arbitration Court early in 1942 to establish the principle of equal pay for the sexes.

Employers capitalised swiftly on the wartime situation and once men moved into the armed forces, the businessmen began to employ women at lower rates of pay. Jessie Street cited an example of an accountant's firm that had replaced the men who had enlisted by women, but they had arranged the duties so that although the same amount of work was being done and the same number of clerks employed, no one woman was doing the work of any particular man. The Government had employed females in the RAAF at two thirds of the male rate. Employers made representation to the Government, exhorting it not to implement equal pay. The Associated Chambers of Manufacturers of Australia expressed concern to the Prime Minister, Curtin, at the representations by the ACTU requesting that Regulations be gazetted granting adult male rates of pay to women engaged in war industries. It agreed that marginal allowances should be the same, but that the male basic wage should not be granted, because it was fixed on the basis of the family unit. It argued that the payment of the full male rate would cause

52. The Manufacturer, 13 Sept. 1941.
53. Street, Truth or Repose, p.205.
54. Beaton, "The Importance of Women's Paid Labour" in Bevege, James and Shute (eds), Worth Her Salt, p.87.
grave repercussions; it would increase the purchasing power of women to buy consumer goods at a time when the wartime economy dictated a drastic reduction; cause great dissatisfaction and unrest among women workers already employed in munitions, wartime and essential civilian industries; increase the cost of the nation's supplies to the government, to taxpayers and consumers. The Central Council of Employers of Australia requested that the Government not proceed with the implementation of National Security Employment of Women, Regulation number ninety-two. It was alleged that the Women's Employment Board was set up "to give effect to the Labor policy of equal pay for the sexes".

In order to prevent the WEB from fulfilling its task, the employers challenged its validity in the High Court. Many individual employers used devious means to avoid paying the WEB rates. The Cooper Engineering Company in N.S.W. paid women in the main shop ninety per cent of the male rate, while those in the annexe doing similar work were paid the Female Metal Trade Award. The women had threatened to decrease their production to sixty per cent in protest at their sixty per cent wages. Management stalled for a further three months, providing various invalid excuses. Ultimately they reclassified many of


58. Beaton, "The Importance of Women's Paid Labour" in Bevege, James and Shute (eds), Worth Her Salt, p.89.
the jobs to avoid payment of WEB rates permanently.

In Melbourne, the Chamber of Manufacturers instructed their members not to pay the WEB rates. In March 1943 three thousand women employed in vital war industries struck to defend their right to receive the WEB rates. It seemed to the workers that employers would prefer a Japanese victory rather than lift the pay rates of women workers. The WEB rates affected only 90,000 women and there were more than 800,000 women in the workforce at the peak of female employment in 1943. The remaining 710,000 were employed in traditional women's jobs and received the accepted fifty-four per cent of the male rate. Even after 1943, when the traditional female employing industries became vital to the war effort, and it was difficult to fill all vacancies, employers refused to raise wage rates. The Arbitration Court supported the Employers' stand and the Government was forced to award a wage rate of seventy-five per cent in the so-called "vital industries". In Lynn Beaton's view, employers' refusal to lift female wages and so to attract sufficient women to essential industries, hampered the war effort.

Therefore, in general, employers represented a powerful group opposed to the implementation of equal pay. The Government, which was responsible for the administration of the war, was forced to make some accommodation on women's wages in order to attract females in sufficient numbers to support the war economy. Nevertheless, private employers did not have such an obligation and the majority resisted the

60. Ibid., p.91.
61. Ibid., p.95.
application of equal pay as they were concerned that such conditions would prevail after the war as they were suspicious of the motives of the Labor Government.

For the CAEP to succeed, it was crucial for it to include private employers in its research and propaganda activities. Nonetheless, it was logical for the CAEP as a pressure group to channel its resources into persuading the Government to act, but it was important for all sections of the community to be educated on the need for equal pay to be granted. Employers used the traditional arguments to oppose equal pay: the fact that the Basic Wage was a family one. This was of course the justification the Arbitration Court put forward for refusing to grant women the full male rate. The CAEP did not accept that viewpoint. In its Tenth Annual Report it stated:

After half a century of deceit and baloney on this subject, practiced [sic] by all arbitration authorities in turn, the Federal Arbitration Court recently admitted that, in the last analysis, the amount of the wage rate fixed by the Court was determined by its view of the amount industry could afford to pay. 62

Earlier in 1942 an economic consultant to the Government contended that such arguments were outdated as many women had dependants and many men had none. Obviously, neither the employers nor the Arbitration Court shared that view publicly. On the other hand the CAEP saw its role as supporting unions in their claims for equal pay. Its propaganda was, however, available to all who were interested, al-


63. Memorandum to Prime Minister on the Women's Employment Board from Economic Consultant, 29 Sept. 1942. CP6/2, Bundle 2B, Item 32. Australian Archives, A.C.T.
though its dissemination was facilitated through its affiliated bodies. Therefore, perhaps the CAEP's function was limited by its ties with the union movement. Therein lay the disadvantages of a pressure group which relied on representatives from other groups. Once the CAEP severed its ties with the feminist groups, its members were trade union representatives only; there appeared to be no provision for individuals who might be interested in working for the cause of equal pay. Therefore the calibre of the union representatives was an important consideration. It was logical to assume that affiliates would have evinced interest in equal pay within their own union to even accept the responsibility of attending a monthly meeting in their own time. Nonetheless, there were limits to how much time members had to devote to the equal pay cause as they were in full-time employment.

The Fifth Annual Report and Financial Statement pointed out that the Council had met monthly during the year and that the Executive met when necessary. However, the Commissions did not function as it was not possible to get "rank and file" members to devote time to special duties. Nevertheless, the convenors of the respective Commissions co-operated with the Executive Officers wherever there was a special job to be done. The audited financial statement for 1941-42 indicated total receipts of £205-11-4, compared with £114-4-4 for 1940-41, indicating a higher degree of support for the CAEP in that period.

64. CAEP Fifth Annual Report and Financial Statement, 21 July 1942. Heagney Papers, MS9106. CAEP Minute Book, 1940-1942. Box 1166/1. La Trobe Library.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.
An assessment of the Convenors of Commissions over the period of the CAEP's existence indicated that they changed each year. The following table gives an indication of the union from which the delegates came and the year they held office.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>Finance</th>
<th>Publicity</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Rubber Workers)</td>
<td>(Federated Clerks Union)</td>
<td>(Federated Clerks Union)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-40</td>
<td>R.L. Day</td>
<td>J. Hughes</td>
<td>M. Arnot</td>
<td>C. Weir (P.S.A.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940-41</td>
<td>H.C. Baker</td>
<td>B. Holdsworth</td>
<td>D. Nichollas</td>
<td>W.J. Baird (Rubber Workers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Amalgamated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Postal Workers Union)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942-43</td>
<td>W.J. Curtin</td>
<td>B. O'Connor</td>
<td>Dr. Lloyd Ross</td>
<td>H.C. Baker (Rubber Workers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Sheet Metal Workers)</td>
<td>(C'wealth Telephone</td>
<td>(A.R.U.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Officers' Association)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943-44</td>
<td>N.A. Brookes</td>
<td>S.B. Ewing</td>
<td>Carmel Coleman</td>
<td>Doris Beeby (Sheet Metal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Water Board)</td>
<td>(Water Board)</td>
<td>(Clerks')</td>
<td>Workers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944-45</td>
<td>J.E. Condon</td>
<td>L. Southam</td>
<td>F. Lockyer</td>
<td>A.W. Thompson (Milk, Ice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Water Board)</td>
<td>(NSW Teachers Federation)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Carters Union)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table only Robert Day and John Hughes occupied the same position for two years. H.C. Baker was convenor of two different commissions over a period of two years. It is difficult to determine whether it was a definite policy of the CAEP to ensure that delegates

67. Information gleaned from minutes of 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 6th and 7th AGMs, July 1938, July 1940, July 1942, July 1943, July 1944. Heagney Papers, MS9106. Boxes 1165/3, 1166/1, 1166/2. La Trobe Library.
received the opportunity to act as convenor of a Commission or whether it was merely time constraints which precluded them from assuming the position for more than twelve months at a time. This fact also meant that Muriel Heagney as the Secretary-Treasurer year after year was able to consolidate her leadership of the CAEP as it was she who had continued to make the contacts with the various bodies on which she could maintain pressure.

Attendance at CAEP meetings ranged from six to thirty-one; with an average of about fourteen. The largest number was recorded at the Annual General Meeting in July 1943 when dissension within the organisation was at its height. This was the period when delegates from the Clerks' Union and the Sheet Metal Workers' Union challenged Heagney's attitude to the WEB decisions and to the CWWW. This evidence supports Penny Johnson's contention that the differing motives of delegates gave the group its dynamism, yet sowed the seeds of its ultimate demise.

From the numbers quoted above, it is obvious that not all affiliated unions were represented at each meeting, particularly when each union was entitled to send two delegates. Representatives of unions such as the Rubber Workers', the Amalgamated Postal Workers', the New South Wales Teachers' Federation were consistent in their attendance over a long period and remained until the end. Therefore, though many remained affiliated, they did not choose to have delegates credentialled to attend and vote at CAEP meetings. It is correct to argue then that only a relatively small number of people were active in the organisation and of course it was Heagney who performed all the administrative tasks. On its letterhead in 1942, the CAEP had listed

fifty-two co-operating organisations. This would entail a possible one hundred and four delegates. However, it was noted that at its Women and Children in Industry in Wartime Conferences, over a hundred delegates attended.

It was clear that, since obviously the issue of equal pay did not just affect women, trade unions dominated by male interests pursued the matter as vigorously, explaining how women activists in the labour movement were able to encourage the men to take up the cause. The feminist women regarded it as a question of social justice, demanding a fair reward for their labour and acceptance of the value of their work being equal to that of men. Nevertheless, the majority of male trade unionists were not interested in the issue until they believed their positions were threatened. According to Jessie Street:

Even the depression did not teach the men leading the Trade Union Movement that the best protection for all workers exists under the application of the principle "the rate for the job and equal pay and opportunity for the sexes". But the sex prejudice of the majority of employers and male trade unionists still persisted. 70

They were, in fact, "slow learners". Nevertheless, the CAEP was an interesting organisation in that it comprised both men and women and it was committed to maintaining a balance in its membership by making provision for a male and female joint president. These positions were filled during the period of its existence. The minutes do not record male delegates, particularly those who participated in the organisation over a long period, making sexist statements and probably more female delegates were critical of Heagney's uncompromising stand than

70. Street, Truth or Repose, p.124.
males. Nonetheless, the mixed motives of the delegates meant that all members did not subscribe to the same ideology. The feminists were committed to the achievement of equal pay as a means of securing economic independence for women; they were not interested in short-term temporary solutions, though at the same time, they recognised that the cheap labour of females eroded the wage standards of male workers. Those who were committed to preserving the privilege of males in the labour force were really not interested in the issue of female equality. The lack of a consistent ideology meant that not all members were solidly dedicated to the achievement of equal pay as a longstanding aim. Therefore, once the wartime conditions of women entering male occupations had been recognised as a temporary situation and provisions made to meet that contingency, most trade unionists were satisfied. They were not affronted by the requirement for advocates to prove that women were of equal value in the workplace as men before the WEB. A comment such as "equal pay will never be achieved under the Capitalist system" was a defeatist one, allowing affiliates to opt out of the struggle. Certain members of the CAEP felt uncomfortable at the criticism levelled by Muriel Heagney at the Labor Government and its establishment of the WEB.

Trevor Matthews, an Australian authority on pressure groups has argued that solid ideological commitment to a cause can inspire members of a group to greater political action. In the light of this analysis of pressure groups, the CAEP was further disadvantaged as it


was not an organisation that would be preferred by a government, as Matthews maintained that official recognition favoured sectional conservative groups rather than promotional associations such as the CAEP. Those pressure groups regularly consulted by governments were producer associations which could effectively threaten to boycott proposed schemes that did not meet with their approval. Governments often tailored their policies not to alienate these associations. This was certainly not the case with the CAEP.

Muriel Heagney had been very confident that the Labor Government would legislate for equal pay. Her optimism was interesting considering her involvement in earlier attempts to gain equal pay which had been met with immediate opposition from male trade union officials. Had she not been so sure of victory, perhaps she may have been more prepared to entertain the gradualist approach espoused by Jessie Street and the UAW.

It was evident that the Arbitration Court would not award equal pay or even an increase in female rates of pay during the war. It remained steadfast to its precedents. Judge Foster of the WEB, although he rarely awarded one hundred per cent of the male rate, recognised that "the community in the future, if not in the present will have to face the problem of so-called "equal pay" much more earnestly than it

73. Matthews, op. cit., p.469. According to Matthews explanations, "sectional" associations purport to speak for their sections in "defence" of their interests, while "promotional" associations seek to promote a cause by appealing, not to a section, to a special group, but to everybody.

74. Ibid.
had so far done".

It may quite well be that females who have enjoyed the higher rates will be influential enough through their industrial organisations to secure the continuance if not the extension of Women's Employment Board rates. It may be that this is but the first step towards "equal pay" or the "rate for the job". On the other hand there is manifest a strong feeling amongst male unionists that females should not be allowed to displace men even at equal rates. Men are the breadwinners and homemakers, and maybe women will prefer that it should remain thus so that they may find their life's work as wives and mothers rather than as machine attendants.

Foster in his judgment in the 1949 basic wage case, where women were awarded seventy-five per cent of the male rate set out his reasons. He still asserted that the male basic wage was a social one; while single females were anxious to receive the higher wage, their priorities changed on marriage; the productivity, efficiency and the needs and responsibilities of females were substantially less than males, and the redistribution of the wage fund so that young unmarried females would receive very substantially increased spending power would disturb the economy in a manner to the disadvantage of the married basic wage worker and his wife and probably of the whole community.

He in fact reflected community thinking on women's wages. Although the ALP included equal pay in its party platform, it was not serious about its implementation. Jessie Street stated in 1966 in her autobiography:


76. Report of the Chairman, 1945, WEB papers, quoted in Lamour, ibid, p.56.

77. 68 CAR 816-187.
I was naive enough to believe that the Labor Party programme stood for equality for women, but I found by experience the Labour stalwarts were as loyal to the status quo of male preference and male domination as their opponents. 78

Trade unionists offered only qualified support for equal pay and married women were also often half-hearted about the issue. No broad base of community support existed in Australia during the 1930s and 1940s for the equal pay movement.

As the war finished and men returned to the civilian workforce, the climate of opinion was less favourable to women achieving reforms in the workplace. They were expected to return to domesticity to create homes for the returned servicemen who had suffered the loneliness of war and lack of domestic comforts. Betty Friedan, author of the Feminine Mystique, pointed to the period after the Second World War as the beginning of the problem which had no name which afflicted married women. Although better educated, women were to expect total fulfilment in their lives through their husbands, children and the domestic sphere. Freudian theories exerted a powerful influence which created a new tyranny of the "shoulds", which chained women to an old image, prohibited choice and growth and denied them individual identity. They were increasingly perceived as sexual objects.

Marilyn Lake supported this contention when she argued that women were encouraged to see themselves as sexual beings with a right to sexual fulfilment, albeit as sex objects, even as populationists and Cold War protagonists clamoured to re-establish women's primary identity as mothers. These tensions were partly contained by women

78. Street, Truth or Repose, p.124.

and men marrying at earlier ages so that their awakened sexuality could be expressed legitimately in wedlock. Early marriage also guaranteed that large numbers of women remained economically dependent, but with fewer children conceived at an earlier age they would have more time at their disposal. It took another twenty years then to realise that a problem existed with this prescribed role.

So it appears that Muriel Heagney and the CAEP were naive to think that equal pay could be achieved while the "ideology of the family" enjoyed community support in Australia. It was deemed natural for men to receive preference and higher wages in the workplace. Members of the Government, the Arbitration Court, the private employers, most of whom were men, reflected society's attitudes. The males in the community would not willingly relinquish power to females and so the supporters of equal pay had to contend with a much longer struggle than they ever envisaged. Changes in society's attitude to women's role were necessary before equal pay was to be gained. The achievement of "the rate for the job" was a much more complex issue than was imagined and perhaps it had to be worked for in conjunction with other women's issues.

CONCLUSION

The story of the CAEP and its attempts to realise the aim of "equal pay for the sexes" clearly demonstrates the difficulties that women in the labour movement confronted when they endeavoured to improve this particular aspect of their working conditions: their wages. Although the CAEP was a formally established organisation, with elected Office Bearers and carefully formulated aims, it met with indifference and outright opposition from many among its supposed supporters.

It would have been reasonable for members of the CAEP to expect favourable treatment from a Labor Government which included the aim of equal pay in its party platform. That equal pay did not eventuate provided insights into the pressures to which a political party was subject when in government. The Labor Party then became an employer with a vested interest in maintaining or reducing labour costs; priorities changed. Employer organisations exerted consistent pressure on the Government to resist the mounting agitation for equal pay during World War II. The CAEP was in no position to match the resources or influence of the employers, particularly as the Government counted itself as one of the group.

As a pressure group, the CAEP did not enjoy the support of all its potential members, as only ten per cent of unions were represented. Had it gained the assistance of the whole union movement, the story may have recorded a different conclusion. Nevertheless, this was unlikely to occur, given the attitude of the majority of unionists to women's industrial issues. In the workplace, the male
workers' interests were to take precedence over those of female workers, whose position in the paid workforce was questionable anyway.

The patriarchal attitudes displayed by members of governments, the Arbitration Court and the union movement meant that the CAEP had a large task to re-educate such people to accept the right of all members of the community to be paid equally for their labour. The ideology of the family, however, was entrenched in the Australian community, supported by the majority of men and women. Therefore the members of the CAEP were attempting a "value change", which was of course very difficult to achieve in a short period; the egalitarian Australian society, in other words, applied only to the males if the situation was evaluated from outside of that predominant ideology.

The CAEP adopted traditional methods to accomplish its aims. It did not entertain the thought of organising demonstrations or strikes to draw attention to its cause, although Heagney felt that industrial action from a strong union would ultimately focus attention on the problem. Nonetheless, the CAEP did not see itself as such a body.

As an affiliate organisation, the CAEP faced the crucial need to engender enthusiasm for the cause among its delegates, who then had to maintain that commitment within their own union or organisation. If energetic action was to ensue, delegates required constant inspiration to spur them to action. It is difficult to ascertain to what extent this occurred. The Joint Presidents and Secretary-Treasurer displayed great dedication to the cause for equal pay. It

was apparent, however, that most of the responsibility for the propaganda and co-ordination was left to Muriel Heagney. In some years the Commissions did not function; whether this was due to members' unwillingness or inability to devote extra time to CAEP activities or whether it was due to the lack of efficient co-ordination by the Executive is open to question. Nonetheless, it was evident that the CAEP lacked sufficient personnel to enable it to be a highly effective pressure group. This was understandable as members were full-time workers with their involvement in the CAEP a purely voluntary exercise.

The honorary nature of positions within the CAEP was an indication of the level of its financial resources. It was dependent upon the affiliation fees of the member organisations and donations to finance its activities. In addition it organised fund raising activities such as Christmas raffles to meet its debts: an indication of its meagre finances. It relied upon free access to radio stations and articles in newspapers and journals to assist its cause. The CAEP was clearly unable to marshall large financial resources in order to influence the government to accede to its requests. This is in stark contrast to large employers who were able to challenge the existence of the WEB in the High Court and who resisted paying women higher rates at every opportunity.

Qualitative factors such as clarity and singleness of purpose, the commitment of its membership and leadership to that purpose, the level of cohesion within the organisation and the consequences of internal divisions, the willingness of the membership and leadership to adopt alternative strategies and tactics where necessary are
important in determining the effectiveness of a pressure group.

The CAEP exhibited a lack of cohesion to the extent that members' motives for supporting equal pay were mixed: there were those who believed in equal pay as a matter of social justice for women; there were others, however, who wished merely to preserve the advantaged position of the male in certain sections of the workforce and supported equal pay for that reason. The leadership did to some extent exhibit a preparedness to adopt alternative strategies when the advent of World War II forced it to deal immediately with instances where employers attempted to pay women lower rates of pay when moving into positions previously held by men.

The forces opposed to equal pay were overwhelming. The CAEP received a greater degree of support when male dominated unions perceived their interests to be threatened with the influx of women into the workforce and the consequent breakdown of its sex-segregated nature. Once the male workers' position was secured with the establishment of the WEB, those unions were satisfied.

Notwithstanding, the CAEP could claim a measure of success in that the Arbitration Court awarded a basic wage for women at 75 per cent of the male rate. But Muriel Heagney was not interested in partial success. Her aim was to realise "the rate for the job" with no sex differential. Any award granting a percentage of the male rate was a denial of that principle and served to perpetuate the sex-segregation of the workforce.

Perhaps the CAEP could have enjoyed greater success if it had been prepared to co-operate with the UAW: although this middle-class feminist organisation was only small in numbers, it enjoyed access to influential members of the Government and the community. The class division was no doubt detrimental to the equal pay cause. Personality issues played a major role in the lack of co-operation between the two groups.

The failure of the CAEP ultimately rested, perhaps, on the fact that it was unable to convince the majority of the community of the need for women's paid labour to be accorded its real value. Therefore a re-appraisal of the status of women in society had to occur before equal pay could be granted. Women's economic needs were to remain of secondary importance in a community which accepted the male as the sole breadwinner. Women themselves had to recognise their own worth and be ready to fight for their right to equal pay. It was to take the second wave of feminism of the late 1960s and 1970s to create a new impetus for the realisation of equal pay in Australia, a struggle for social justice that continues in a marketplace labour force still divided by gender.
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