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## Unity and Betrayal

This chapter turns from the close focus on Lucy's relationships to people and community at Erskineville to consider Lucy on what became the very public stage of state and national politics. The shift in Lucy's awareness to the importance of public campaigning, beyond the school grounds, which had begun in Cessnock in 1929, can be seen too in the way she responded to the political challenges of the Depression.

By the late 1920s, the NSW Teachers Federation was rising in influence and – at least for a time – in membership. Lucy had worked hard throughout the 1920s, advancing the cause of women teachers in public schooling, working closely with allies like Jess Rose, Hettie Ross and Beatrice Taylor while always considering the union as a whole. But as the Depression loomed, Lucy was working in the bush. She had felt the Depression earlier than her colleagues in the city, first in the grim conditions of Cessnock and then at Grafton Public School. She had developed a concern about the marginalisation of rural schools and the failure to admit girls to agricultural training that lasted throughout her later city postings. In her national role as president of the Federated State School Teachers' Association, she frequently raised the needs of rural schools for more attention, better funding and more appropriate training for teachers.<sup>1</sup>

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1 *Education*, 8 December 1932, 50.

## Pay cuts

From 1929, the city too began to feel the impact of the global financial collapse. As economic pain spread, the old antagonism towards married women teachers began to resurface. Lucy's commitment to the recognition of women teachers had been unswerving. In 1920 the NSW Arbitration Courts had set the pay of women teachers at 80 per cent of that of a male teacher for the same work. Nevertheless, the Teachers Federation policy of Equal Pay for Equal Work – agreed in 1920 (after a major struggle by women teachers) – was held intact. Lucy had continued to support this Equal Pay policy within the Federation, demanding not only equal pay but better training and real career paths for women as assistants and as senior teachers. This tenacity of hers had been a key factor in fighting off the challenges to the Federation's policy of Equal Pay in 1921 and 1925.<sup>2</sup> Not only had she led the mobilisation on the floor of the Federation's Annual Conference, but she had been a key element in the resistance on the Federation Executive to the headmasters' attempt to undermine the pay claims by headmistresses (of infants' schools) in 1927.<sup>3</sup> Lucy's strong commitment to this issue was shared by a number of women teachers, some in the Communist Party of Australia like Hettie Ross and many others outside it, including Margaret Kent-Hughes, Beatrice Taylor, Rose Symonds, Ruth Lucas, Jess Rose, Margaret Swann, Clarice McNamara and Elizabeth Fordyce. All of them had acted many times through the 1920s to defend the hard-won Federation policy calling for Equal Pay.

As the Bavin-led conservative NSW Government struggled through the first months of the Depression, pay cuts for everyone became a reality. The NSW *Public Service (Salaries Reduction) Act 1930* cut all public service wages and brought the wages of teachers into line with those of the rest of the public sector, which meant in effect that the earlier guarantee that the pay level of women teachers would be 80 per cent of that of a male teacher, which had been won in 1920, was overridden. From June 1930, women teachers were only guaranteed 54 per cent of the wages of male teachers for the same work.<sup>4</sup>

2 Bruce Mitchell, *Teachers, Education and Politics: A History of Organisations of Public School Teachers in New South Wales* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1975), 57–59.

3 Mitchell, *Teachers, Education and Politics*, 59. Lucy as vice president had been on the Executive 1924–27.

4 *Education*, 8 December 1932, 50; *SMH*, 20 December 1932, 9; *Maitland Daily Mercury*, 10 January 1933, 8.

## Unionists' betrayal

To make matters worse, talk of forcing married women teachers out of the NSW service re-emerged. Teachers were seen as receiving a relatively high salary and there were certainly many others who were far worse off. But the rising anxiety among teachers that they too would face further cuts in pay and dismissal had a number of contradictory effects.

The Educational Workers' League (EWL) – associated with Communist Party members like Sam Lewis, Hettie Ross, Ethel C. Teerman and (later) Harry Norington but also with labour activists like Beatrice Taylor – initially took an uncompromising stand against all pay cuts. Consisting of only a few members, the EWL was a minority group, but it worked effectively through the Men's Assistants' Association to put its views forcefully before Federation Council and campaigned strongly against the Bavin Government. Two of its number – Sam Bendeich and Alf Paddison, both Federation members – had stood for parliamentary election in November 1930, and the Teachers Federation campaigned for them.<sup>5</sup> The Women Assistant Teachers' Association, the body with which Lucy, Beatrice Taylor and, in later years, Hettie Ross were associated, took a more cautious stand at this stage, criticising the Federation for circulating 'political propaganda' in the election campaign.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, they campaigned strongly against the pay cuts. Taylor had been increasingly recognised in the Federation, serving as one of four vice presidents from 1921 to 1933 but elected as senior vice president for a year in 1929. Lucy adhered to R.F. Irvine's economic arguments at this time, which opposed the austerity measures of Bavin and the banks and, instead, supported the expansionary strategies advanced by Keynes and others. This view was seen as being close to the policies of Lang's state Labor opposition to Bavin's government.

The election of November 1930 had resulted in a landslide victory for Lang, who argued against austerity cuts and was for a time strongly supported across the political spectrum. His government went on famously to challenge the demands of English banks (and the Commonwealth Government) by defaulting on the interest on loans owed by the state. In a tone more aligned to an austerity agenda, however, Lang's Education

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5 Mitchell, *Teachers, Education and Politics*, 94–95.

6 *Ibid.*, 95.

Minister William Davies had barely assumed office before he announced in December 1930 that he would take up the suggestion put to him by senior public servants that the government should dismiss women teachers if they married employed husbands, so as not to unfairly increase the income of their families. This echoed the call made in 1911 by another Labor minister, G.S. Beeby, that his new government would dismiss married women teachers.<sup>7</sup> Just as in the 1910s, there were immediate responses, from both male and single women teachers within the Teachers Federation, who agreed with the minister. Beatrice Taylor, Ettie Cunningham (soon to marry Sam Bendeich) and Lucy Woodcock (who was still at Grafton) argued at the annual Federation Conference in December 1931 that it was unfair for married women teachers to be dismissed, but a series of male Federation members contended that such a policy would 'solve the problem of employment for many young Australians'.<sup>8</sup>

Lang later suggested this policy had never been considered seriously by his government, but Davies's statement had drawn so much support within the Teachers Federation itself that it was regarded as a real threat by many. Just like the earlier challenges to the NSW Teachers Federation's Equal Pay platform, in 1921, 1925 and 1927, this reactivation of the threat to married women teachers' work demonstrated that many men – and some women – within the Federation were broadly opposed to the rights of women.

Lucy was to demonstrate in later years how deeply she understood the labour movement – she could brief Rewi Alley in the 1950s on the ALP and trade union delegations to China by giving him the most minute details of labour leaders' voting histories, their loyalties and alliances. She knew where all the skeletons were hidden.<sup>9</sup> She had been in the innermost circles of union decision-making, not only in her own union but in the NSW Labor Council and the Australian Council of Trade Unions. She remained loyal to the labour movement all her life. Yet this conflict in the NSW Teachers Federation over married women teachers' jobs forced Lucy to face the reality that within the organisation she had helped to build, which she saw as offering the collective unity that teachers needed

7 Ibid., 26.

8 Ibid., 57–59; *SMH*, 23 December 1931, 9. Hettie Ross had married a fellow CPA member in 1928 but divorced in 1931 after a childless marriage. She drew closer to Lucy Woodcock in later years and was, like Lucy, a close friend of Rewi Alley.

9 LGW to RA, 1955–1965, Rewi Alley Papers, MS-Papers-6533-307, NLNZ.

to advance their conditions and interests, there were nevertheless deep divisions. She began to look around outside the union, among middle-class feminist organisations, for allies.

The struggle to defend the jobs of married women was not, however, the only pay battle. In August 1931, the Lang Labor Government enacted its *Public Service (Salaries Reduction) Amendment Act 1931* to cut wages still further, although not by the same rate as the previous Bavin Government's initial Salaries Reduction Act of June 1930. Nevertheless, Lang continued the situation of enforcing a higher proportional reduction in the salaries of women teachers.<sup>10</sup> Opposing this was a difficult case to argue – it meant demanding the restoration of wages to all teachers, male and female (despite teachers being seen as privileged compared to industrial workers because teachers had some sort of job security), and then arguing for a further increase to those of female teachers to bring them back up to the 80 per cent level. Lucy made the case frequently but she was aware of the challenges it posed.<sup>11</sup>

Lucy was in an even more difficult position than other activist teachers. As a single woman, she had been confident that she had the backing of all women teachers, single or married, when she had argued in the 1920s for Equal Pay. But in defending the rights of married women to retain their jobs, she was taking a stand against the views of many single women teachers, who believed that their own jobs were threatened by women continuing to teach after they had married. This insecurity on the part of single women teachers was even more acute in the uncertainty of the early 1930s. Education historian Marjorie Theobald has named the very few single women teachers, other than Lucy and Beatrice Taylor, who took prominent roles in defence of married teachers' jobs: of those Theobald identified, only Lucy and Beatrice were in NSW – the others were Phoebe Watson in South Australia and Florence Johnson in Victoria.<sup>12</sup> Most of the activist women in NSW had married, like Clarice McNamara, Hettie Ross (although briefly) and, from late 1931, Ettie Cunningham, so even those who were CPA members were firmly located within the mainstream

10 *Education*, September 1932, 363–64, 368, 378; October 1932, 394–96; November 1932, 8, 10, 12; and December 1932, 50.

11 See her speech as FSSTA President: *SMH*, 10 January 1933, 12; *Education*, 15 February 1933, 138–40.

12 Marjorie R. Theobald, 'And Gladly Teach? The Making of a Woman's Profession', in *Women Teaching Women Learning: Historical Perspectives*, eds Elizabeth Smyth and Paula Bourne (Toronto: Innana Publications, 2006), 76.

of conventional gender roles.<sup>13</sup> Lucy was the most prominent and the most senior of the single women who insisted that there was only one issue, the rights of all women teachers, so that married women's jobs and Equal Pay for all women teachers were the same struggle.<sup>14</sup> Lucy made her decision to stand on principle, to defend the right of all women to have security of tenure based on competence not on gender. In doing so, she risked alienating precisely the women in her union who were most like herself, women who had chosen, for whatever reason, not to marry.<sup>15</sup> There may have been very few married women teachers who recognised the enormous risk those like Lucy and Beatrice were taking on their behalf.

## Building alliances

Predictably, it was the threat to married women's employment, rather than the question of all women teachers' wages, which raised concern outside the Federation. Among those alarmed were the numerous feminist organisations then in existence. Most were middle class but had a broad interest in women's legal rights, so although they may not have sympathised with unions, they were nevertheless disturbed by threats of discrimination against married women. Lucy Woodcock had previously had little contact with these feminist bodies, having instead focused her attention on teachers' organisations like the Women Assistant Teachers' Association and the Federation. Nevertheless, the rising interest of the feminist organisations offered activists like Lucy a strategy to put pressure not only on the government but on the NSW Federation itself, which as Lucy knew only too well was still dominated by senior male teachers who were openly sympathetic to the idea of the dismissal of women teachers.

In February 1931, soon after the Federation Annual Conference where the activist women called for the defence of married women teachers' jobs, Lucy addressed the United Associations of Women (UA), led by Jessie Street, which had set up a subcommittee to work with teachers.

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13 Marjorie R. Theobald and Donna Dwyer, 'An Episode in Feminist Politics: The Married Women (Lecturers and Teachers) Act, 1932–47', *Labour History*, no. 76 (1999): 63.

14 Another was Beatrice Taylor, although the memory of her activism has been more closely associated with her membership of the CPA, her membership of the Educational Workers' League and her trip to the Soviet Union in March 1932.

15 See Theobald and Dwyer, 'An Episode in Feminist Politics', 65–66, for the strong undertow of opposition to married women working as teachers, among single women as well as from a majority of men.

An umbrella organisation linking feminist groups from across the political spectrum, the UA had been active since 1929 on issues like suffrage, prostitution and temperance – as well as the need for more and better trained domestic servants. It had been influenced by a number of movements, including Theosophy and the New Education Fellowship, which was another of Lucy's affiliations.<sup>16</sup> Jessie Street had drawn a wide range of women's organisations together and continued to exercise strong leadership: her fearlessness and fluency on public platforms being as much a factor as her social and political position, coming as she did from an affluent landowning family and married to the Supreme Court judge Sir Kenneth Street.

At that time, however, the UA seldom took the same position as a union like the Teachers Federation, despite the Federation's white-collar membership. While Jessie Street's energy and practical approach was essential to many feminist campaigns, her class position was evident in, for example, her approach to the shortage of domestic servants. Jessie had set up an employment agency for domestic servants, the Home Service Company, in 1923, although the conditions she hoped to assure for the servants, with some time off guaranteed, seldom materialised. Jessie nevertheless was to oppose an award for domestic servants in April 1937, on the basis that public opinion was not yet ready to accept it, despite the UA supporting the newly formed Domestic Workers' Association in November 1937 when it made an unsuccessful attempt to obtain an award.<sup>17</sup>

When Lucy Woodcock spoke to the UA in February 1931, it had already expressed concern about the threatened dismissal of married women teachers. Lucy saw the opportunity to build an alliance between the activist women teachers and the UA on the issue.<sup>18</sup> Jessie Street, as UA President, wrote to the Lang Government, cautioning against the move Davies had flagged. This intervention assisted the Teachers Federation to force the government to retreat.<sup>19</sup> No further moves were made against married women teachers by Lang's government, but after its dismissal in

16 Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1999).

17 Pat Ranald, 'Feminism and Class: The United Associations of Women and the Council of Action on Equal Pay in the Depression', in *Worth Her Salt: Women at Work in Australia*, eds Margaret Bevege, Margaret James and Carmel Shute (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1982), 280–81.

18 *SMH*, 5 February 1931, 3.

19 Theobald and Dwyer, 'An Episode in Feminist Politics', 61–62.

May 1932 the incoming conservatives, under Premier Bertram Stevens with Education Minister D.H. Drummond, immediately revived the plan to dismiss married women teachers, bringing a Bill before parliament within months. This time Jessie Street made a more public protest through the *Sydney Morning Herald* in August 1932, signalling the growing support of the UA and other feminist organisations.<sup>20</sup>

The Federation held its position to protect married women teachers' jobs, but there had been rising support for Drummond from many of the male Federation members and certainly amongst its then all-male executive group. Some male teachers, however, demonstrated sustained opposition to any discrimination against married women teachers. The most consistent and vocal of them was Sam Lewis, who moved that the Federation Council call a 'mass meeting of married women teachers and student teachers' to protest against the new government's austerity measures. His motion was rejected by the August council meeting.<sup>21</sup>

The Senior Executive at that stage was entirely male – President Alfred McGuinness, Deputy President C.H. Currey and Senior Vice President E.J. Rourke<sup>22</sup> – and this group met with Minister Drummond in September 1932 to discuss the sacking of married women teachers. President McGuinness later told Federation Council that he, with this all-male Senior Executive group, had done 'all he could' to have the minister reconsider. Theobald and Dwyer have pointed out how little public outcry the NSW Teachers Federation had made when they had the chance.<sup>23</sup> Council meekly accepted the president's account, confirming for Lucy that her senior male colleagues could not be relied upon to defend the interests of women teachers.

Despite her determination to work through the Federation to achieve a unified strategy on all problems, the ambivalence of the leadership of her own union on this issue must have given Lucy cause to stiffen her position

20 Ibid., 59.

21 *Education*, 15 September 1932, 264.

22 *Education*, February 1932 for all three names. In Mitchell, *Teachers, Education and Politics*, this deputation is mentioned but only the office titles are given, with no names attached. This is then quoted directly in Theobald and Dwyer, 'An Episode in Feminist Politics', but they assume the senior vice president to have been Lucy. In fact, Lucy had no office in the NSW Federation in 1932, because she was holding the arduous post of president of the Federated State School Teachers' Association (FSSTA). She returned to the NSW Federation as one of four vice presidents in 1933 and was then finally re-elected to the senior vice president role only for 1934, a post she held till her retirement in 1953.

23 Theobald and Dwyer, 'An Episode in Feminist Politics', 67–68.

and consolidate her new relationship with the UA. Lucy had always been good at building alliances: into this one, she brought the name of the powerful NSW Teachers Federation, in which there was a large majority of female members, many of whom had been campaigning for Equal Pay, like her, for decades.

Lucy and Jessie Street in the UA found common ground in their concerns about discrimination against and between women, although they came to it from very different positions. Jessie was the elite and affluent mother of four, who had often in the past been the respectable face of women's activism. Lucy was a single woman from a lower middle-class family of limited means. Her personal life was ambiguous; she was unmarried and childless. She had worked to pay her own way through two university degrees to rise as far as possible for a woman within her profession, to be then obstructed by the entrenched prejudice against all women in the Education Department. Despite such differences, the two women were of a similar age, and may have shared many common values.

Although Lucy was such a staunch unionist, overall the status of teachers was understood to be intermediate, at least in the eyes of many teachers. Like other professional women, such as nurses, who were struggling for recognition, teachers often regarded themselves as a cut above industrial workers in class terms. Lucy had certainly always stressed the professional nature of the teaching service. Many teachers held an aspirational belief in their higher status, which had been one of the great difficulties in forming the teachers' unions. Politically, Lucy and Jessie were both moving further to the left in their alliances over the 1930s and so may also have found common ideological interests as well as developing a warm personal relationship. In any event, Lucy joined the UA at some time in 1931 or 1932, although her major commitments at this time were to teachers' unions rather than to any of the women's organisations.

The UA events were widely attended during the Depression by women from all political affiliations. The CPA activist Phyllis Johnson, for example, remembered attending a UA seminar in which Lucy spoke about Equal Pay at some time in the 1930s, indicating the widespread interest in the UA despite the CPA leadership criticising it as 'bourgeois feminism'.<sup>24</sup>

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24 Phyllis Johnson, interview with Heather Goodall, 10 May 2007; Joy Damousi, *Women Come Rally* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994); P. Griffiths, 'Women and the Communist Party of Australia, 1920–1945' (Honours thesis, Macquarie University, 1998).

## Creating a federal union

As well as dealing with the rapidly developing problems at state level, Lucy was taking a major role in creating a federal teachers' union. As the Depression bit deeper, it became increasingly urgent to try to bring all teachers' unions into the ambit of the federal Arbitration system, to allow a more consistent approach, which teachers like Lucy hoped would counter the divergent policies of state governments. Lucy had been actively involved with the national teachers' organisations – first the Australian Teachers' Federation (ATF, formed in 1921), which merged with the Federated State School Teachers' Association (FSSTA) in 1928.<sup>25</sup> She was elected to the presidency of the FSSTA in January 1932, the first woman ever to have been in this role. So during the year of Lang's dismissal, Lucy's attention was taken up with the interstate organising demands of the FSSTA.

From this national perspective, although Lucy was deeply disappointed by the betrayal of senior male teachers in the NSW Federation, she was forced to recognise the widespread divisions among women teachers themselves over the issue in many states outside NSW. NSW was not alone in having a high proportion of single women teachers who opposed the employment of women teachers who married.<sup>26</sup> Ambivalence was widespread in other states and became even more evident in South Australia when the Women Teachers Guild refused a request from the UA to support the NSW Federation call for the reinstatement of married women teachers.<sup>27</sup>

After struggling on a national level throughout 1932 with the deepening economic crisis and the rising tide of antagonism to women both inside and outside the profession, Lucy used her final speech as FSSTA President in January 1933 to lay out her strongest criticisms and her vision for the future. First, as an economist, she condemned the austerity measures now being imposed by conservative federal and state governments:

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25 Mitchell, *Teachers, Education and Politics*, 26.

26 *Ibid.*

27 K. Whitehead, 'The Spinster Teacher in Australia from the 1870s to the 1960s', *History of Education Review* 36, no. 1 (2007): 14. The Women Teachers' Association was in existence in South Australia from 1936 to 1951. It refused the UA request in 1941.

Our troubles are entirely man-made, arising out of pure mismanagement ... If a household were conducted upon the same principles as nations had recently been conducting their affairs, we should have the spectacle of some of its members being gorged to excess, and others dying from hunger, although all the pantries were bulging with food. Clearly, our problem to-day is not deficiency but our failure to make sane use of the actual abundance which surrounds us on every side. The world is richer than ever – its people infinitely poorer.<sup>28</sup>

She reserved her most stinging attack, however, for what she called the ‘Sex Distinction’ against women in the teaching profession in all states. She outlined the many different ways in which all women were disadvantaged as teachers in each state, ranging from salary discrimination to blockages to promotion through to outright dismissal:

While the salaries of teachers remained at the mercy of politicians, there would always be cause for unrest. An overhaul of the national educational policy was long delayed. The woman was debarred from advancement in the teaching profession because of sex distinction. The higher positions in the service were closed to her, for it was the administrative policy to give men preference. Women plead that capacity to hold down a job, and not sex, should be the determining factor in remuneration.

The assault upon the married women teachers in New South Wales showed how deeply implanted were the prejudices that governed the position of women. Women did not ask for privileges, but they asked that prejudice should give way to reasoned judgment.<sup>29</sup>

In the midst of this attack on industrial discrimination, Lucy gave a glimpse of herself:

The real trouble is that nobody really believes (except herself) that a grown-up woman should be allowed freedom to live her own life. Her personal freedom must be always controlled. Not only is she expected to live more timidly, but half of the population feel it is their bounden duty to compel her to do so. It was in obedience to the dictates of people who hold these views that the Married Women’s Bill was introduced.<sup>30</sup>

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28 *Education*, 15 February 1933, 138.

29 *SMH*, 10 January 1933, 12; *Education*, 15 February 1933, 138–40.

30 *Education*, 15 February 1933, 139. Lucy included the parenthetical phrase ‘(except herself)’.

It is not hard to hear the personal anger – and the pain – within her words.

Lucy remained determined that women should be properly recognised and respected in the teaching profession. Her outspoken challenges to her fellow Council members at the Federation and her sustained demands for women teachers across the nation were recognised among women unionists. The Windsor–Richmond branch of the Federation for example, in September 1934, forwarded ‘a letter of thanks and appreciation to Miss L. Woodcock for her determined stand in the interests of women teachers’.<sup>31</sup>



Figure 5.1: Lucy c. 1930s, at the height of her union organising.

Detail from undated photograph of Teachers Federation executive, late 1930s or early 1940s.

Source: NSW Teachers Federation archives, undated photograph P10168.

Yet despite her frustration over the mismanagement of the economy and her intense anger at the discrimination against women, Lucy ended her FSSTA Presidential Address in January 1933 with hope. She outlined a vision of lifelong learning, the expression of progressive education aimed at nurturing independent inquiry, democratic debate and principled decision-making:

We still, in practice retain an out-of-date conception of education as the mere imparting of knowledge. Our examination system is largely responsible for the maintenance of this conception ... It is necessary to remind ourselves that the real value of education is not measured by the amount and variety of knowledge we can force into the minds of the young ...

The aim, I take it, is to train the mind to observe accurately, to think clearly, to discard prejudices, to weigh evidence, to make judgements on the weight of evidence ... We should aim to create

31 *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 21 September 1934, 6.

a living intellectual interest in minds ... The curricula of the schools should be based on the conception of man as a citizen of the world instead of a citizen of a small State ...

Our schools may be said to have succeeded if we can arouse a deep and abiding interest in the search for knowledge in all who pass through their portals. Our pupils should not be a standardized product, when they leave us, knowing so much of this and that, but young people equipped with well-balanced minds; young citizens who will go further along the pathway of life unprejudiced and untrammelled in quest of knowledge and pursuit of it until life's journey ends.<sup>32</sup>

Lucy remained active in the FSSTA but, late in 1935, the organisation dissolved itself. Its sole goal had been to achieve 'a real Australian Union', in the words of NSW President A. McGuinness, for teachers across all states through recognition in the federal Arbitration Court.<sup>33</sup> A High Court decision in 1929 ruling that education was not an 'industry' had made that impossible, but the FSSTA had battled on for some years, hoping to achieve a referendum that would change the law on which the High Court decision had been based. Lucy believed that access to the federal Arbitration Court would at least achieve 'stabilization of the rates paid to the Assistant Teachers in every state'.<sup>34</sup> Eventually, late in 1935, the state unions from Queensland and South Australia decided they would withdraw from the federated union forcing the FSSTA to dissolve itself in January 1936.<sup>35</sup> Lucy said of the FSSTA: 'If the Association had done nothing else, it had brought about an improvement in the morale of teachers, who, prior to 1922, had been content to accept what was given.'<sup>36</sup> The Australian Teachers' Federation then immediately reconstituted itself, without expectations of access to a federal industrial award, and Lucy continued to take a high-profile role in its attempts to draw teachers together across state borders.

32 *Education*, 15 February 1933, 137–40.

33 This principled goal was more in keeping with the non-industrial organisation the Australian Teachers' Federation, formed in 1921. The FSSTA had formed in 1922 to attempt to gain a federal Industrial Court award when the NSW Government removed the NSW Teachers Federation (along with the Public Service Union) from Industrial courts. The ATF merged with FSSTA in 1928 and their goals *were* then the same for some years.

34 *SMH*, 10 January 1933, 12.

35 The 1929 High Court decision was that education was not an industry. Ann R. Shorten, 'The Legal Context of Australian Education: An Historical Exploration', *Australia New Zealand Journal of Law Education* 1, no. 1 (1996): 20–21. It left no avenue for further activism. The Australian Teachers' Federation eventually won recognition in the federal Arbitration System in 1986.

36 *Advocate* (Tasmania), 6 January 1936, 9. Report of the Hobart Conference of the FSSTA in which it made the decision to dissolve itself.

## Defending Beatrice Taylor (1932–33)

While Lucy was throwing all her energy into her Australia-wide work as FSSTA President, from January 1932 to February 1933, her long-time colleague and ally Beatrice Taylor had become the focus of controversy and departmental discipline. Taylor had been a founding member, with Sam Lewis and others, of the Education Workers League, a small activist group in the NSW Teachers Federation. Many members, like Lewis, were associated with the Communist Party and all its members were committed to challenging the attacks on education funding being blamed on the Depression. Beatrice Taylor, then teaching at a primary school, was sponsored by the EWL in March 1932 to travel to Europe where she visited the Soviet Union. She gave a lecture in November 1932 about the condition of education there and the NSW Education Department demanded she explain her views. Taylor refused, arguing it impinged on her civil rights as a private citizen. In response, the department suspended her for misconduct and wilful disobedience.<sup>37</sup>

There was widespread public reaction through December and January. The UA – in which Lucy was an increasingly active member – was one of the 278 organisations that supported Taylor, demanding that she be reinstated. The Paddington Town Hall was packed for a meeting just before school was due to start on 31 January 1933. Supporters then held a widely attended Sydney Town Hall meeting. Jessie Street's friend Clive Evatt took Taylor's case before the Public Service Board that early in February 1933 found in Taylor's favour, leading to her reinstatement and later promotion.<sup>38</sup> While this case turned out well for Taylor, it was a troubling indication of the power of the Public Service Board to sit in judgement over teachers. With Lucy so occupied in the FSSTA, she was not prominent in this case, but the problem rankled. Her concerns resurfaced in later years when Sam Lewis was himself disciplined in 1955. Lucy's defence of Lewis, published in 1956, was aimed directly at the powers held over teachers by the Public Service Board.<sup>39</sup>

37 Martin Sullivan, 'Taylor, Beatrice Mary (1893–1982)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, The Australian National University, [adb.anu.edu.au/biography/taylor-beatrice-mary-15677/text26875](http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/taylor-beatrice-mary-15677/text26875), published first in hardcopy 2012, accessed online 17 November 2018.

38 'Defence Committee Will Continue to Function', *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 10 February 1933, 9.

39 Lucy Godiva Woodcock, *The Lewis Case and You* (Sydney: self-published with donations, 1956).

## Equal Pay and Equal Status: 1937

The Public Service Salaries Reduction Act of 1930 and the associated Amendment Act of 1931 were finally done away with in 1937, but this did not restore the 1920 guarantee that women would be paid 80 per cent of male salaries for equal work. But this 80 per cent figure had never been Lucy Woodcock's goal – instead she had always insisted that the goal was full equality of salaries for women and men.



Miss Lucy Woodcock.

Figure 5.2: Lucy Woodcock as caricatured (affectionately) in the Teachers Federation journal *Education* in January 1939.

The cartoon reflects her courage and tenacity in the face of the failure of many male colleagues to support her long campaign for equal pay.

Source: *Education: Journal of the NSW Teachers Federation*, 28 January 1939, p. 110. Courtesy, State Library of New South Wales.

Her alliance with the UA contributed to the establishment of the Council for Action on Equal Pay (CAEP) in May 1937, initiated from the Federated Clerks' Union by John Hughes and Muriel Heagney. This alliance between activist unionised women and the elite middle-class feminist organisations held until at least the war years. There were disagreements in the CAEP between the unionists (notably Muriel Heagney, who became honorary secretary) and the UA about whether there should be a demand for immediate full pay equality (Heagney's position) or an incremental rise. But the UA remained within the CAEP until 1939, when it suspended its membership for six months, before finally withdrawing in August 1940. Even then, it continued to be in communication with the CAEP throughout the war, because Lucy Woodcock, by then Senior

vice president of the Teachers Federation but also a UA member, moved into the position of co-chair of the CAEP with her fellow Federationist Robert L. Day in 1942.<sup>40</sup>

The overall position of the CAEP did not, however, meet all the concerns of the NSW Teachers Federation, where women still faced the glaring problems that had preceded the sacking of married women. First, as discussed earlier, their campaigns for Equal Pay for women teachers appeared to be going backwards as Depression measures took effect – the 80 per cent of male teachers' salaries, won by women teachers in 1920, had been reduced still further due to the cuts to NSW Public Service salaries.<sup>41</sup> Even more fundamentally, as Lucy's FSSTA speech had pointed out, all women continued to be blocked from significant leadership positions. So at the same time as the CAEP was formed, Lucy and other Federation activists like Una F. Ellison established an Equal Pay and Equal Status Committee within the Federation. As Lucy said at the birth of the CAEP:

We do not admit that all the grey matter and wisdom is in the head of a man. Equal opportunity must be demanded in addition to equal pay.<sup>42</sup>

The new Federation Equal Pay and Equal Status Committee worked closely with the CAEP, and drew support from CAEP co-founder, John Hughes from the Federated Clerks. Lucy invited him to speak to the Teachers Federation members on 4 June 1937, soon after the CAEP was formed.<sup>43</sup> Hughes paid deference to the Teachers Federation – and to Lucy:

The principle of sex-equality is one that has been heard much of in the last decade. The Clerks' Union is not the pioneer mover. The Teachers' Federation has already been partially successful and Madam Chair (Miss Woodcock) has played an important part.<sup>44</sup>

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40 Beverley Symons, 'Muriel Heagney and the Fight for Equal Pay During World War II', *The Hummer* 3, no. 1 (Summer 1998–99): 1–13.

41 *Public Service Salaries Act (No. 2) 1931* (NSW). See *Education*, 8 December 1932 (W.J. Hendry, NSW TF Sec to Ed. Min D. H. Drummond, 14 November 1932); *Education*, 15 November 1932, 12–14; 15 April 1933, 189; *SMH*, 20 December 1932, 9.

42 *Truth*, 23 May 1937, 18.

43 'Equal Pay for the Sexes', *Education*, 21 August 1937, 311.

44 *Ibid.*

As always, it was a struggle to mobilise male members of the Federation, as male staff benefited very directly from the glass ceiling confronting women in the teaching service. Nevertheless, the Equal Pay and Equal Status Committee struggled on, supported by leading male activists like Sam Lewis and drawing others in wherever possible.

There was to be a major change, however, with the coming of World War II, which dramatically escalated interest in the CAEP among mainstream unions. The war brought more and more women into employment, often into jobs men had vacated to go into the armed forces. These big unions, with majority male memberships, suddenly saw themselves threatened by low-paid women workers, still usually forced to work for 54 per cent of the male rate, which made the issue of Equal Pay into a serious industrial campaign for a few years. At the same time, women saw opportunities to demand a role in planning for a new society after the war was over.

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