

13

Uniting Women

Lucy did not ever abandon her vision of a world where borders were unnecessary but she made only one more trip overseas, a brief second visit to China in 1964 with four other women on the invitation of the People's Republic of China's National Women's Council. With her Peace movement commitment unshakeable, she put much of her considerable energies into showing Australians that they did not have to be isolated or fearful. She invited them to recognise that they belonged in a region where emerging nations were offering visions of new and peaceful worlds. Rewi Alley had written to her in 1955:

Dear Lucy,

... your letters are grand to have, giving one a sense that things are being done constructively ... You have done a fine job, Lucy, in getting around and bringing the word back home again ...¹

In fact, what Lucy went on to do was bring the *world* back home.

This was a time, however, when very new movements were emerging in women's politics. Lucy was by this time elderly and, however sympathetic she might have been to the goals of these new movements, she seemed to be from a different era. Many of the activists who in the 1960s were young women, just beginning to take part in politics, knew Lucy's name and remembered her being in figurehead roles, but few of them knew anything about her life or her passions. Lucy commented on this sense

1 Rewi Alley to Lucy Woodcock, 17 October 1955, from Lucy Woodcock's papers in the care of Kit Edwards.

of distance as she reflected on age – as we will see in these final chapters. When we look at her practical actions, we see her sustained energy and participation, often as speaker and always as an organiser, chairperson and letter writer. But at the same time, we see her carefully avoiding taking the limelight. Nevertheless, Lucy not only contributed to the causes she had been fighting for over her long life, but took steps to link the struggles in Australia with those taking place internationally.

Our final chapters trace the different ways that Lucy tried to show Australians that they could be global citizens not island hermits. This chapter explains her multifaceted role as president of the United Associations of Women (UA) where she was spokeswoman, strategist, journalist and campaigner. The next chapter considers both her public role as president of the New South Wales International Women's Day (IWD) committee and her more low-key role as mentor and tutor to Sydney's Chinese-background community and students.

The most familiar strategy for Lucy was the one discussed in this chapter, as the president of the United Associations of Women (UA). This position was closest to the role she had taken in the union, where she had been in an organisational structure where she could call on alliances and trusted colleagues built up over a number of years. We can see her role in the UA through her articles in the *UA Newsheet*, which were about the transnational networks around movements for industrial justice, to raise the status of women, for progressive education and, from 1961 onwards, for peace.

Both the situations we look at in the following chapter were less familiar for her. First, in her role in IWD, Lucy was embroiled in the internal tensions dividing both the Communist Party in Australia and the Australian Labor Party. At the same time, there were new developments in Aboriginal politics and in the Peace movement that all became entangled in IWD. Lucy felt more at home in her tutoring work after years in inner-city public education, but now she was engaging with new groups, which meant she had to deepen her knowledge about Chinese Australians and Chinese-background international students. She learned that some things were very different but that others were depressingly the same.

As always, however, Lucy's busy life meant that no single body of source materials ever told the full story. For this chapter on the UA, the archival and published records we draw on are the *UA Newsheets*; the press reports

– most of which are from the CPA newspaper *Tribune* as the mainstream press ignored the left-wing and, particularly, peace activities of the time – and the records of ASIO, the secret service observers, from the files on Lucy herself, the Teachers Federation and the Union of Australian Women (UAW), as well as those of other individuals like Sam Lewis.

Yet at the same time, Lucy was active in IWD and was tutoring. We can see the differing coverage in each source by looking at just one short period of a few months in 1960. The ASIO reports covered her IWD events – although they assumed they were organised by the UAW, which the government regarded as a ‘communist front’. So the ASIO reports detailed the visiting Chinese speakers and the Australia–China Society reception on 10 May, as well as the major Peace rallies in Victoria and New South Wales on 18 May where Lucy spoke at Lithgow. The ASIO agents reported in great detail all the speeches at the UAW National Conference from 27 May to 2 June.

The CPA newspaper reported somewhat differently. *Tribune* covered IWD events and followed the Chinese speakers’ travels, but did acknowledge that many organisations were involved, including the UA. *Tribune* also reported the Peace rallies. On the same page, and unlike ASIO, *Tribune* mentioned an education conference. Its report on the UAW conference, however, did not detail the activists’ speeches in the very useful way that ASIO did.

Only Lucy, however, writing in the *UA Newsheet*, reported extensively on the large national conference on education on 21 May 1960. She explained that it had been attended by representatives of parents’ and citizens’ groups and mothers’ clubs as well as teachers from each state and had been held at the Leichhardt Stadium. Yet, neither in Lucy’s pieces nor the rest of the *Newsheet* was there any mention of the Peace rallies on 18 May nor the UAW conference at the end of the month, at both of which Lucy had spoken.

So each type of resource offers a different view of Lucy’s roles in the UA and the IWD committee from 1957 to around 1964. But for the low-key interactions Lucy was having at the same time with the Chinese-background communities and students, there are no published or government records. The very few sources include some of Lucy’s letters to Rewi Alley from 1954 to 1965, as well as personal memories and some glimpses in the few papers that Lucy kept.

* * *

Earlier chapters have traced Lucy's steps as she formed a strategic alliance with the UA in 1932 to build the campaign against the legislation forcing the dismissal of women teachers who married.² She had, as well, built a strong friendship with the UA's Jessie Street, despite significant class differences. A visiting speaker to the UA, Dorothy Crabb, commented in September 1961 that the UA was an organisation 'of erudite professional women', which seems to have well described the UA.³ Despite Street's leadership, its members were not the elite and affluent women of Jessie's class, but rather were working professionals, many of them university-educated, some with families and some unmarried. More teachers joined after Lucy became active, and there were many members of the Business & Professional Women's Club (B&P Club), in both urban and rural businesses. Although these women may have been landowners, it was their interest as working farmers that the *Newsheets* addressed.

The UA monthly *Newsheets* are a rich source for learning about the many campaigns of the women's movement, some of which were very close to Lucy's heart. Rather than tracing all of them, however, this chapter will focus on the campaigns that demonstrate the transnational nature of Lucy's inspiration. The UA *Newsheets* allow us to see far more about how Lucy worked than the brief notes of motions and votes in the Teachers Federation journal, *Education*. At the UA Lucy worked month by month beside Vivienne Newson, the fellow Peace activist and *Newsheet* editor. Lucy, however, increasingly wrote many of the entries herself, either signing them with her initials 'LGW' or her full name or writing under the headline 'The President's Diary' or 'The President Writes' (or 'Reports' or 'Reflects!').⁴ Despite the significant proportion of teachers in its membership, Lucy and Vivienne were writing for a different audience than the men and women teachers and unionists to whom Lucy had previously been directing her comments.

Through the pages of the *Newsheets* until the early 1960s, Lucy can be seen focusing on three issues: first and most extensively, it was Equal Pay and opportunity for all women, whether married or single, working

2 *Married Women (Lecturers and Teachers) Act 1932* (NSW).

3 UA *Newsheet*, September 1961, 4.

4 The UA reports have been read in detail from 1950 to 1956 inclusive. The *Newsheets* came out at the beginning of each month, usually four or six close-typed A4 pages, with half-page feature articles, and then shorter items.

class or middle class; then equality of access to leadership and board positions; and, underpinning it all, access to education for women, including apprenticeships for all forms of trades, with special attention to those in rural and agricultural fields. From 1961, activities of the Peace movement came to be a more regular and extensive topic in the *Newsheets*. Tenacious and relentless, Lucy wrote dozens of letters on all these topics to politicians, unionists and public servants, inside and outside Australia, responding to polite dismissals with still more letters. She used the media increasingly, being heard frequently on radio talk shows like Eric Baume and many ABC debates and formal discussions.⁵

Prior to Lucy's assumption of executive roles (vice president in 1956, then president in 1957 till her death in 1968) the UA had few speakers who were not from and speaking about Australia, even after the Peace campaigner Vivienne Newson returned from overseas to become *Newsheet* editor in 1953. What overseas speakers and information there were in the *Newsheets* came largely from the United Kingdom and Europe and seem to have been dependent on Jessie Street. The *Newsheets* occasionally contained colourful letters from Jessie about her travels, like that in August 1950, which detailed a tour with Kapila Khandvala around her city of Bombay, but these described Indian working people and villagers as exotic and needy, while Jessie positioned herself as the sympathetic but distanced Westerner.⁶ This positioning was quite different, as will be clear below, from that which Lucy made in her references to the workers in these emerging nations.

With Lucy's assumption of executive roles, the absence of international news changed quickly. Before long there was someone talking about Asia or international issues (e.g. about Russia) for at least one of the four weekly luncheons announced in each monthly *Newsheet*. Lucy ensured there was information about the communist countries as well as about those in what was regarded as 'the West'. Just in 1962,⁷ as an example, speakers included women from – or speaking about – Ceylon and the USSR in February; the Netherlands, Norway and Europe in March; Japan

5 Virginia Madsen, 'Innovation, Women's Work and the Documentary Impulse: Pioneering Moments and Stalled Opportunities in Public Service Broadcasting in Australia and Britain', *Media Information Australia* 162, no. 1 (2016): 19–32.

6 UA *Newsheet*, August 1950, 2. Such letters were unusual in the context of Jessie's autobiography too, which focused on the top-level meetings Jessie had with politicians and diplomats. Her own and her later biographers' selectivity has perhaps narrowed the impression of the range of her interactions.

7 UA *Newsheets*.

and Scotland in April; South Africa and Apartheid, India and Europe in May; Antarctica, France/UNESCO and Australian Aboriginal conditions in June; the South Pacific with two speakers in July; speakers from the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) conference in August; Japan and the US in September; Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Japan and the UK in October; and the US in November. International news became a regular and distinct part of each monthly issue, gleaned from overseas press – gathered perhaps by the Open Door International or the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) – but with particular attention to the 'new nations' of Africa and Asia, as well as to Russia. Over 1962 again, there were news items about advances for women in the US, Italy and Canada in March; USSR, US, United Arab Republic and the Philippines in April; Malaya and Greece in May; Pakistan, Egypt and the UK in June; Cuba, India and the UK in July; Nyasaland in August; Sierra Leone, the Philippines and, from the Open Door International, a long article about Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina and Peru in September; from Denmark, Switzerland, US, UK, Canada, Kenya and Japan in October; Indonesia in November; and there were speakers foreshadowed from Iran and Malaya for the New Year (published in May 1963). The speaker from Rhodesia in October was not from the minority white governing group. Instead, the UA was addressed by Mrs Godsang Gaobepe, who was in Australia on a UNESCO scholarship. Lucy chaired Mrs Gaobepe's session on the subject 'Through an African Woman's Eyes'.⁸

Perhaps this was a product of the times: by the early 1960s, travel was cheaper and easier and women were travelling more widely. Yet these entries in the UA *Newsheet* in the 1960s echoed closely Lucy's article immediately after her retirement:

Women in other parts of the world, during a few short years, have achieved an equality far greater than we have. We owe these women a debt.⁹

This was the way that Lucy had begun her active contribution to the UA and it was to be characteristic of all her *Newsheet* entries on industrial justice and the status of women, up to and including those in the last months of her life. The only way they changed was that it became clearer that when she said 'other parts of the world' she was referring to the

8 UA *Newsheet*, October 1962, 4.

9 UA *Newsheet*, March 1954, 1–2.

decolonising nations. What was notable in all of her entries was that Lucy's goals for future equality were all measured by the newly won equality of women in the constitutions of so many of these emerging nations in the decolonising world. The way that Lucy positioned decolonising women was very different from the exotic but needy role in which Jessie Street had placed them in 1950, however much Street admired their questions. Instead of describing them as needy, Lucy took quite a different stance. She was looking to the new nations of Asia and Africa as the models to show Australians the way to reach equality in gender as well as racial terms.

Equal Pay

Lucy's large body of *Newsheet* writing about Equal Pay shows best the many dimensions of her activism. Her transnational vision was entangled with every level of this work.

She had to face a rising issue for both men and women – particularly outside teaching – which was automation. She had long campaigned against the classification into 'men's' and 'women's' work: from the late 1950s, automation was eroding any rationale about physical strength that had earlier been given for this distinction. As she memorably said in 1960: 'Women have to teach men that automation knows no sex!'¹⁰

Lucy's *Newsheet* responses to her opponents were often shaped by satire and humour as she pointed out the flaws in their arguments. But at times her anger was visible at the continued dismissal of women's claims. She lashed out at misogynist politicians and trade union leaders who feared women's equality.¹¹ She actively promoted women's organisations that were putting the case for working in industries like meat processing,¹² and she castigated the leaders of their unions who refused to listen to their women members. Trade union leaders had *never* been criticised in the UA *Newsheets* in the period before Lucy's formal roles, but she was not reluctant to name and shame the men who tried to hold back the industrial tide. Mr F. Lovett, secretary of the Broken Hill Shop

10 UAW Second National Conference 27 May – 2 June, 28 May 1960, Lucy Godiva Woodcock ASIO file, Vol. 2, f 194, A6119, 2031, NAA.

11 UA *Newsheet*, August 1958, 1. Under Lucy's signature, Premier Cahill was condemned for lagging on fulfilling his promises on equal pay. Lucy wrote: 'Mr. Cahill may be remembered as the Premier who had a vision, but lost the will to implement it, because of the pressure behind the scenes of men who fear equality.'

12 UA *Newsheet*, February 1958, 3.

Assistants' Union, came repeatedly to her attention. He withdrew union membership from and tried to have their employers sack 22 women shop assistants in Broken Hill because they were married. Although the law forcing the dismissal of women teachers who married had been repealed in 1947, the 'marriage bar' had remained in place in many industries, and, despite the Boyer Report recommending change in 1958, this rule did not end in the Commonwealth Public Service until late in the 1960s.¹³ The UA *Newsheet* published extracts from Mr Lovett's 1959 speech to a compulsory Conciliation Court hearing, where he stated that:

For the most part, married women employees were economically a menace – a threat to stability and a help-mate to depression ... And we can't lose sight of the fact that, in the main, working wives spend their earnings on the wrong things.¹⁴

Lucy responded as UA President in a letter to the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. The paper, however, did not publish it, so the UA *Newsheet* did:

The Four Freedoms of the UN Charter guarantee the right of women to work; the ILO and the ACTU affirm this right. The present situation in Broken Hill, which has been caused by a fall in world prices for the commodity which Broken Hill supplies, calls for some positive approach to the problem, not the negative one of selecting a group and denying them rights enjoyed by all other members of society.¹⁵

Yet, in 1967, Lovett was still demanding that married women be forced to resign as shop assistants, arguing they should never have been 'allowed' to join the Clerks' and the Town Employees' unions. Once again, and only six months before her death, Lucy responded, scathingly pointing out:

what the isolation of male unionists can do to their thinking and how backward they can become in relation to modern trends in the community ... This attitude of 'allowing' women to belong to

13 Extract from the *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Public Service Recruitment*, 1958 (Boyer Report), Australian Government Public Service Commission, www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/current-publications/apsc-news/thumbnails/boyer-report, accessed 2 January 2019.

14 UA *Newsheet*, August 1959, 2.

15 *Ibid.*, 2–3.

their appropriate union contravenes the basic principles of trade unionism. The word is 'the right' – not a privilege, to be extended to them by their fellow male workers.¹⁶

The Barrier Industrial Council complained that Lucy's attack was unjustified because the employment situation in western NSW was so marginal that married women had to give way to unmarried girls or all the young people would leave for the city. Lucy agreed that this was a real problem but insisted that the way to solve it was to work with government and industry to develop new enterprises, *not* to marginalise and then attack a segment of working people.¹⁷

Lucy attended peak union meetings, like the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and the NSW Trades and Labor Council, reporting back to the UA membership, explaining the issues and the strategies. The situations were always complex and Lucy's union experience and economic background were important resources previously inaccessible to the UA. Prior to Lucy's active role, the UA had expressed support for equal pay but had never included details of disputes or industrial laws, referring to 'a factory' and 'a union' without any names or context.¹⁸ Even if industries were identified, the laws governing job classification and margins were never discussed.

Again, Lucy's presence changed all that. To explain the complexities of industrial conditions, Lucy patiently wrote concise and accessible 500-word pieces for issue after issue of the *Newsheet* to show how the classification of jobs as either 'men's work' or 'women's work' had always been a way to undermine women's as well as men's pay. She explained, too, how the use of 'protective legislation', which seemed to be about taking care of women's needs, was in fact usually a way to discriminate against them by paying lower wages while avoiding charges of discrimination. All of this, plus the persistent obstacle of 'margins' for alleged skills, needed to be considered in the complex tangle of reforms needed to reach equality. Given the increasing concern over automation, she spent a great deal of time in 1961 explaining the issues around the recently imposed graphic arts award, which had just been overturned by an appeal to the Industrial Court. The issue turned on the rising use of high technology in many industries. Due to new printing equipment, the court had initially

16 UA *Newsheet*, September 1967, 1.

17 UA *Newsheet*, October 1967, 1.

18 UA *Newsheet*, July 1950, 1. This strike in 'a factory' is a good example.

reclassified some jobs as ‘women’s work’, thus increasing the work available to women but reducing the newspaper proprietors’ wages bill and cutting out men’s jobs. Lucy pointed out that this was exactly the situation where the classification of work as ‘male’ or ‘female’ was damaging to the employment of all workers, men and women. Her solution was to raise women’s wage rates and to remove sex classifications altogether, so there was a simple rate for the job, no matter who did it. The court’s action was challenged by the Graphic Arts union, which won its appeal. Lucy counted this as a victory although it did not raise women’s wages – it just meant that the battle to do that continued!

Lucy’s accessible articles and her quoted letters, along with editor Vivienne Newson’s ‘news’ items, had allowed UA members to follow the industrial issues around women’s work far better than before. Lucy brought into view, in this way, the sequence of hope and disappointment between the first ACTU Conference on Equal Pay in 1958 and the third in 1961. The account of this long campaign in the UA *Newsheet* showed the strategies Lucy used to be effective in supporting fellow activists during long struggles – a quality that must have been extremely important throughout her union career but had not been visible in the pages of the Federation journal *Education*.

As the UA *Newsheet* described this long campaign, first, in an apparent response to the 1958 ACTU conference, the NSW Premier gave a promise in April to legislate for equal pay, a major shift from the federal government’s insistence that it would leave the issue up to the Industrial Courts. But, after months of prevarication, when the legislation finally appeared in November, it did little more than address an anomaly that had crept in during the Depression, so it simply meant that women’s wages were raised slightly – from 67 to 75 per cent of men’s. Nevertheless, it was a small step along the way, and Lucy’s reports to the UA always offered positive interpretations by pointing out that even minor improvements would form the basis for more advances in the future.

After three years of high-level campaigning by national unions as well as women’s organisations, with deputations to Prime Minister Menzies and wide publicity, there was to be a National Equal Pay Week, in March 1961, organised by the ACTU, to be observed in every state.¹⁹ The recession of 1961 was beginning to hit unskilled women workers and married women

¹⁹ UA *Newsheet*, May 1961, 1–2.

hardest, so it became increasingly urgent that equal pay was achieved. Lucy had of course been campaigning all her working life for Equal Pay, but she went along enthusiastically to many events representing the UA, often with her old friend and fellow unionist Betty Dunne, then treasurer of the UA and a clerk who had been active in the Public Sector Association. The climax was to be a two-day ACTU seminar that was expected to produce practical strategies to achieve pay equality. Instead, the delegates heard nothing more than calls for more inquiries and surveys and for 'gentle persuasion'.

Lucy's exasperation was visible in her report to the UA:

The discussions might have been new in 1938, but not in 1961. The winds of change, that blow so strongly in newly emancipated countries, have not reached the ACTU and its members. It is still bogged in the rituals of the past, still concerned with preserving orthodox procedure in its approach to equality; with establishing a Women's Bureau, instead of pressing for the inclusion of a clause ensuring the equality of women in the Constitution, which is in process of revision, and of making the issue of Equal Pay for the Sexes a live election issue for the forthcoming State and Federal elections.

Once roused, women – half of Australia's populations – could bring about the ratification of ILO Conventions Number 100 and 111 and could change the attitude of the Government on this issue of equality. If they use 'persuasion' it will be 2000 AD before Australia catches up with the new Nations within the Commonwealth on this vital question of giving its women equality.²⁰

Yet this anger was not Lucy's contribution to the seminar. Betty Dunne, although herself frustrated by the way women were given so little time to speak, added this postscript:

As the curtain was about to fall on the 1961 Seminar, our Chairman, Miss Lucy Woodcock, rose, and in the five minutes at her disposal, gave a most stirring speech on the reasons why women will be denied social justice until equal pay and sex equality are established facts and not something to debate.

20 Ibid., 1.

It was a climax to two days of frustration, and gave a fresh breath of hope that so many of the delegates and observers had come to the Seminar to hear.²¹

Just as she did in this UA report, each time Lucy explained the complexities of Australian state or federal industrial law, she pointed to the decolonising new nations as inspiration for the ways their constitutions were enshrining equal pay and civil rights for women. Lucy was not a romantic about these new nations – her reports about women's conditions in India, Japan, China and the Soviet Union were all alert to the disappointments and failures in some of those grand constitutional promises. But nevertheless, the equality of women with men as citizens had at least been recognised as a foundational principle of these new states. It is ironic today, then, that Lucy's frustrated reference to the year 2000 looks sadly optimistic!

Lucy saw the UA as a vehicle to intervene directly at the international level through the International Labour Organization (ILO) whereas previously she had acted through the education unions. Lucy frequently demanded that the government endorse ILO Convention 100, on Equal Remuneration (1951), and Convention 111, on Discrimination in Labour Conditions (1958). To this, too, the federal Menzies Government had repeatedly sidestepped the issue by saying it had to be left to the Industrial Courts. However, Lucy pointed out to the UA membership, just as frequently, that these two ILO conventions held a major contradiction, by retaining 'protective' labour exemptions to 'discrimination'. Lucy nevertheless welcomed the announcement that the ILO would hold an Asian conference in Sydney in November 1962, offering UA hospitality to the women she assumed would be among the overseas visitors 'because of the importance of the roles which Asian women are playing in the development of their countries, we hope there will be many women in the various delegations.' There was to be disappointment, although this was hardly a surprise. There were few women apparently in attendance, although Lucy persisted with the offer until the last moment.²² Nevertheless, by the following year (1963) there was to be a conference on 'Women Workers in a Changing World' that was to reflect the rising concern and focus on automation that removed questions of physical strength from sex classifications. Lucy as always responded strongly, arguing that this was an important discussion

21 *Ibid.*, 2.

22 Conference to be November 28–December 8 1962, *UA Newsheet*, April 1962, 3; October 1962, 2; December 1962, 1.

to be held and must result in more pressure to fulfil equality in pay rates – removing discrimination by having one rate for the job. She took the opportunity to write again to the Australian Government and Opposition, asking if their parties would ratify ILO Conventions 100 and 111 – only to be told by Menzies and Calwell that they would not commit before the coming election but would decide later.²³

Status of women

Although less extensive than her writing on industrial issues, Lucy's input to the *Newsheets* on the status of women bore the same approach of drawing on the lessons of the decolonising world as the benchmark of progress. She focused her attention less on the questions of property and divorce that had filled the *UA Newsheet* before 1954 and more on the presence of women in leadership roles. Her concern was visible in every issue with mentions of her numerous letters to the various heads of government and ministries about boards of all sorts, from the Public Service Board, her old *bête noir*, to the boards of hospitals, the Anglican Board of Missions and universities. At the same time, she called for open access for women to all jobs, from judges to taxi drivers, garbage collectors and drovers, as well as to civil responsibilities like jury duty on equal terms and conditions, including compulsory service, as men.

Often she used humour, satirising the Australian Institute of Management that had a conference in 1962 about secretaries as the 'Right Hand of Management' but had failed to include any secretaries – or indeed any women at all – among its speakers.²⁴ She was more blunt with British journalist Anthea Goddard, who had written seriously that 'women have won absolutely nothing from equality'. Lucy called her views 'ludicrous', turning to the decolonising world to define progress:

The 20th Century, significant for scientific advancement, is also important for its recognition of the rights of people – men and women. The freeing of the colonial people and the partial economic emancipation of women are features that are now realities ...

The emergence of women in 65 countries to equal political rights is a reality that will take some organisation to destroy. Women are needed as first class citizens, intelligently sharing and participating

23 *UA Newsheet*, October 63, 2; November 1963, 4.

24 *UA Newsheet*, July 1962, 2–3.

in guiding destinies of mankind. Woman's former status as a second class citizen, classed with minors, criminals and lunatics, allowed her no scope even to 'act, subtly as consultant' ...

As a journalist, enjoying equality with male journalists, we were surprised that you should give so much of your valuable time to report such a stupid movement ...²⁵

Lucy had a particular concern about the councils and governing bodies of universities. She had herself sat on the Senate at the University of Sydney in 1942 as a graduate representative, which reflected the interest she had – along with the Teachers Federation – in the way universities controlled the curricula in secondary schools. The questions she raised as UA President had expanded, however, to point out the rising numbers of women students at universities. Lucy herself had completed two degrees – the hard way – as a night student while working a full-time job. She wanted more women's voices to be heard to represent those students, but she also wanted better provision for the retraining of women in mature age to allow them to meet the needs of a changing workplace and to return to work after child-rearing.²⁶ Just as they had been throughout, Lucy's examples of women's competence were consistently drawn from the decolonising world: from the role of Mrs Pandit at the UN in 1953 and Lakshmi Menon as both Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs with Nehru and President of the All India Women's Conference in 1958, to Mrs Sumati Morarjee of Bombay becoming managing director of the Scindia Navigation Company, to the 1966 election of Indira Gandhi as Indian Prime Minister.²⁷ It was a sustained theme in all her writing that the constitutional guarantees of gender equality built into the constitutions of new nations had allowed women to demonstrate already their capacity, skills and determination in such responsible leadership roles.

Education

Lucy's writings on education and Peace in the *Newsheets* took a slightly different approach – she saw these two movements as collaborations and partnerships, in which the goals were still far off for everyone but that the best strategies to get there would be friendship and mutual learning. She remained convinced, however, that there was much that people in

25 UA *Newsheet*, September 1962, 2.

26 UA *Newsheet*, May 1958, 2; July 1958, 1.

27 UA *Newsheet*, May 1958, 4; October 1962, 3; February 1966, 1.

Australia could learn from their neighbours in the decolonising countries and it should be to these close neighbours that Australians should look for partnerships.

Lucy had always been active at the state, federal and international levels in organising by teachers – she had co-founded the NSW Teachers Federation, had served as president of the Federated State School Teachers' Association in 1931 and been an office holder in the NSW NEF since 1937. Particularly since her time in rural schools – from Eden to Cessnock and then to Grafton – as well as being aware of her sister Beth's life on a grazing property, Lucy had been aware of the presence of girls in agriculture and in the technical trades. There were UA members who were rural farmers as well as those who were teachers and unionists, and those rural women were receptive to Lucy's sustained interest in making technical and vocational trades training along with agricultural science and skills available to women. Lucy was just as consistent in her criticism about the diminishing numbers of girls studying sciences and maths at schools, blocking them from scientific careers, including agriculture and medicine. As UA President, she demanded that this problem be addressed at all levels. Girls – and their families – were simply making logical judgements about their future prospects, Lucy argued. If they chose these careers, they faced few job opportunities ever being offered to women, and those that were offered had pay that was never equal to those of male colleagues and in which there were no chances of promotion. So, she asked, why should they choose these careers?²⁸

As well as access to the sciences and mathematics at universities, Lucy argued for an increased number of apprenticeships that would allow training in the workplace and through community cooperatives. This linked her strongly to the international. Not only were cooperatives a central part of Rewi Alley's work and teaching practice in China but Alf Clint, Lucy's fellow Australian Peace activist, was a pioneer of cooperatives in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and among Aboriginal people in Australia. Clint had given luncheon lectures to the UA members about his PNG work before Lucy's time and she brought him back to talk about cooperatives among Aboriginal people in rural Australia as well as about his work in the Peace movement. Building networks as always, Lucy kept Rewi informed about the formation of Alf's cooperative education hostel, Tranby, in Glebe in 1957.²⁹ Many of the Indian women

28 For example, *ibid.*, March 1961, 3; November 1961, 2; July 1962, 2; November 1962, 2.

29 Lucy Woodcock to Rewi Alley, 16 July 1957, Rewi Alley Papers, NLNZ.

with whom Lucy was in touch were, like Anasuya Gyan Chand, long-time activists in the development of cooperatives in India. The Indian cooperatives had involved agricultural workers generally, and large-scale cooperatives had been favoured by the post-Independence government in rural areas. But cooperatives had also been utilised among women seeking economic independence through craft work and the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) had been closely involved. Furthermore, cooperatives had been an approach also developed among Adivasi, the 'Tribal' or Indigenous peoples of various areas across India, who had often converted to Christianity as a political statement to extract themselves from local power structures. It had then been through Christian or Christian socialist networks, like that to which Alf Clint was affiliated, that they had become involved in the international cooperative movement.

All of this talk of cooperatives also of course raised the spectre of communism, which Lucy had had to struggle with in her career as a teacher and unionist. The UA had made a significant stand in 1954 when Lucy's presence at the Stockholm Peace Conference had been challenged by the Australian Federation of Women Voters (AFWV). The UA had taken decisive steps to endorse Lucy's contribution, despite the accusations that the Peace movement was communist-led, and then, to make its message clear, the UA had disaffiliated from the AFWV. On Lucy's return to Australia and the organisation, she felt more strongly supported by the remaining members of the UA to pursue her goals of gender justice in education as well as in the workplace, but was nevertheless cautious in leading the UA members beyond the middle ground.

At the national level on education, Lucy was actively involved as UA representative, but also as a former president, with the conference held by the Australian Teachers' Federation in Canberra in 1958. Despite Lucy's careful approach to polarising Cold War politics, ASIO kept her under surveillance and took notes on her contributions to the debate. The security officer was, however, more interested in her informal conversations with teachers from Western Australia and other states about education policy, union matters, other delegates and, in particular, her impressions of her trip to Soviet Union schools.³⁰ Lucy herself was apparently mostly concerned about passing on to her fellow delegates the fact that she had

30 20–21 May 1958, NSW Teachers Federation ASIO file, Vol. 3, f 54, A6122, 2477, NAA.

been prevented from speaking to schoolchildren or in schools about her experiences in Japan, China and India when she returned through Western Australia in 1955.³¹

Lucy took a similar role in the UA on education as she had done in industrial matters, explaining the technicalities and the politics in short, accessible articles. She did this in February 1962 when the Wyndham reforms were announced.³² She explained how they would work but she also pointed out some concerns, so that *Newsheet* readers could take an informed look at how the reforms operated in the schools they knew, able to recognise improvements but be alert to potential problems. At the same time as she was writing these explanations to the UA readers, she was also attending union meetings and had a particular interest in the training of teachers. The Assistant Teachers group was, of course, where her career had begun and this had been one of her early organising roles in the Federation. Strong training of teachers had been a major part of her appreciation of the Soviet education system and she had been a consistent advocate of more resourcing and better planning in order to increase teacher training. So she took a very active role, through the pages of the *Newsheet*, in a campaign to ensure that when trainee teachers were offered government Teachers' College scholarships, they became automatically employees of the Education Department, receiving the same industrial benefits that members of the Teachers Federation received.³³

In some respects, her continuing involvement in NSW education beyond the demands of one particular school allowed Lucy to reflect on her previous positions. While headmistress at Erskineville, which in 1932 had been one of the first schools to have the new 'Opportunity Classes' selected from primary schools on the basis of IQ testing, Lucy had distinguished IQ testing from the university-controlled exams that she had so bitterly opposed. She had been supportive of the way the primary school Opportunity Classes worked at Erskineville, where she felt the selection process grouped children of comparable abilities and allowed additional time for the type of creative, exploratory activities advocated by progressive educators. But when in 1943 the IQ test was introduced as a way to select for high schools, Lucy had been far more critical.

31 Ibid.

32 UA *Newsheet*, February 1962, 3.

33 UA *Newsheet*, June 1962, 2–3.

Her views did not appear in the pages of the *Newsheet* but were part of an interview she did in 1959 for the UAW journal *Our Women*. There she pointed out that the IQ test was primarily a measure of reading. At this time, a wider range of media including television was available. So the capacity to read text was not the only means of communication required. Instead, critical skills in reading images and sound were also increasingly needed. She felt that ‘the IQ should never be regarded as a final determining factor and should be the servant, not the master, of the educational system’. She argued that the role of schools was to *teach* so that children who may have low IQ scores at one stage would, with highly trained and well-resourced teaching, later produce first-class work.³⁴

At the international level, Lucy worked by bringing the UA into the network of the New Education Fellowship, which already had a close link to the NSW Teachers Federation. The NEF had taken up the challenge of decolonisation and was a very different organisation in composition than it had been in the 1930s. It had been accused of leaning towards communism and had lost American funding because of the accusation, but the NEF continued to bring educators together across political borders.³⁵ Its 1962 conference in Sydney was titled ‘The Winds of Change in Education’ and it had speakers from the US, the UK, India and the Philippines on ‘the changing relationships between East and West and need for understanding’. Lucy was frustrated, however, because the conference was poorly attended. This was largely, in her view, because it had been necessary to hold it in the school holidays as the NSW Education Department would not give teachers any leave if they wished to attend. The departments in Western Australia and South Australia supported the NEF by guaranteeing such leave for conferences, but ‘NSW resists such liberal ideas so the vital messages were given to “enthusiasts only”’.³⁶ The low attendance may, however, have reflected a decrease in teacher involvement with the NEF – its appeal in Australia seems to have been declining in this period.³⁷

34 September–November 1959, cited in Lucy Godiva Woodcock ASIO file, Vol. 2, f 137, A6119, 2031, NAA.

35 Christopher Clews, ‘The New Education Fellowship and the Reconstruction of Education: 1945 to 1966’ (PhD thesis, Institute of Education, University of London, 2009), 52, 83–122.

36 UA *Newsheet*, October 62, 3.

37 Margaret White, ‘Traversing Personal and Public Boundaries: Discourses of Engagement in New Education, 1930s to 1980s’, *Paedagogica Historica* 43, no. 1 (2007): 151–63, doi.org/10.1080/00309230601080634.

A new development was much more evident in the speakers at the UA luncheons – this was the presence of Colombo Plan students who were coming in increasing numbers into the Australian university system. Lucy met a number of them through the UA meetings and elsewhere. She took an increasing interest in them, seizing the opportunity it gave her to learn more about them and their countries at the same time as she offered them her educational skills.

Peace

The *Newsheets* had *not* reported at all on the major Peace rallies in 1960. Lucy had been heavily involved in organising the metropolitan conference, and then spoke at Lithgow; yet, apart from a reference to the Black Sash movement in South Africa (March 1961) where women protested against apartheid, there was no mention in the *Newsheets* up to 1961 of women taking direct action of any sort and certainly not about the Peace movement. The absence of this topic is more remarkable given the intensity of Lucy's concern during 1956 and 1957 in her letters to Rewi Alley about the atomic testing occurring at the Maralinga range. She was deeply angered by the exorbitant expense of the tests, about the 'huge preparation and much money going up in smoke that could help ordinary people'.³⁸ She believed, like many others, that the unusually wet conditions in Australia and elsewhere during the 1950s must be caused by the impact of the many atomic explosions occurring.³⁹ 'The H-Bomb', she wrote to Rewi, 'is very real and people are beginning, too late, not just to wake up but to do things.'⁴⁰

Although it is not clear why the *Newsheet* issues were silent on this theme until 1962, it may have been the lengthy after-effects of the 1955 split in the Australian Labor Party – when anti-communist members formed the Democratic Labor Party. Although the split allowed continuing ALP members far more freedom to take part in organised Peace movement activities, the repercussions went on for some years, as Lucy commented to Rewi Alley in 1957.⁴¹

38 Lucy Woodcock to Rewi Alley, 14 March 1956, Rewi Alley Papers, NLNZ.

39 Lucy Woodcock to Rewi Alley, 14 March 1956, 14 July 1956, Rewi Alley Papers, NLNZ.

40 Lucy Woodcock to Rewi Alley, 16 July 1957, Rewi Alley Papers, NLNZ.

41 Lucy Woodcock to Rewi Alley, 11 December 1957, Rewi Alley Papers, NLNZ.

There were other reasons, however, which made the year 1962 very different: the Menzies Government had again supported the testing of nuclear weapons perilously close to Australia. In April, the *Newsheet* carried the UA protest over the government's approval of the UK decision that its colony of Christmas Island (Kiritimati) should be a bomb test site.⁴² It was as if this had given Lucy the platform she needed to launch the UA headlong into her Peace campaigning.

In the April issue, too, the *Newsheet* reported on the trial of demonstrators against the NATO airbase from which the H-Bomb could be launched, as well as discussing a disarmament conference being held in New York. It included extensive discussion of the US Women Strike for Peace movement, which had written to President Kennedy in protest over nuclear weapons. The June *Newsheet* carried further news about US citizens protesting at the continued presence of US troops in Vietnam, and the UA – that is, Lucy – wrote to the Women Strike for Peace movement to support it:

The organized force of women throughout the world is a most important factor in the preservation of peace and in Australia, women are becoming much more interested in all aspects of this great problem.⁴³

Lucy had not, however, moved to campaigning fully in the UA *Newsheets*. There was no mention at all in the *Newsheets* of a large rally held in Sydney's Trocadero at the end of April 1962 to call for an end to all nuclear tests.⁴⁴ Lucy was on the speakers' platform with Alf Clint, Bill Gollan and Bill Morrow, on behalf of the Peace Committee. What the UA did do was ask the heads of all the Christian Churches to make the Easter sermons and masses of their clergy centre on 'the quest for Peace, the banning of Nuclear Tests and Total Disarmament'.⁴⁵

The August *Newsheet* then heavily publicised the WILPF conference to be held in Sydney later in the month and quoted a British Peace activist, Jacquetta Hawkes, co-founder of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

42 UA *Newsheet*, April 1962, 1. Note this was Kiritimati Island, in the UK colony of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, now part of the Republic of Kiribati.

43 UA *Newsheet*, June 1962, 2.

44 *Tribune* (Sydney), 2 May 1962.

45 UA *Newsheet*, May 1962, 2.

(CND), calling for the banning of all forms of war.⁴⁶ The *Newsheet* went on to quote the UK feminist magazine *Women Speaking*, which cited the Canadian Peace activist Helen Tucker:

It is time that the embarrassed shuffling-off of women's opinion ended and that they – and all men – realized that they have a powerful role to play in the salvation of mankind. Taking a cue from the Black Sash movement in South Africa, we wish, with Mrs Tucker, President of *Voice of Women*, that women might find the resources to picket the Geneva Conference and keep the delegates sitting until, like the Cardinals at a Papal election, they reach agreement.⁴⁷

The speakers at the UA luncheons began to include regularly people who spoke on the Peace movement, like Agnes Stapledon (October 1962), president of the UK section of WILPF, on the recent WILPF conference in Sydney along with Lucy's colleagues on the Peace Council, including Alan Walker (May 1962) and Bill Morrow (September 1962). In October, too, the *Newsheet* published a report on the WILPF conference and the UA wrote to ALP Opposition parliamentarian Tom Uren asking him to convey its protest at plans to install two US bases on Australian soil as they were a threat to world peace.⁴⁸ In November, Lucy quoted the chief Australian delegate to the UN in an article headed 'Australia Joined Other Non-Nuclear Powers in Demanding an Early Ban on Atomic Testing'. It continued:

The chief Australian delegate, Sir James Plimsoll, told the UN main Political Committee that major Powers should agree immediately to stop all tests which caused radioactive fallout.⁴⁹

Lucy wrote on behalf of the UA to congratulate Plimsoll and the government but attacked Senator Nancy Buttfield (Liberal, South Australia), who had purported to be 'putting the woman's point of view' in minimising the dangers of radiation and atomic warfare. The UA instead approved of Senator Dorothy Tangney (ALP, Western Australia), who had supported the nuclear test ban and argued that face-to-face communication between peoples of opposing states was the best strategy for peace.⁵⁰

46 UA *Newsheet*, August 1962, 4. See Jacquetta Hawkes, *Women Ask Why? An Intelligent Woman's Guide to Nuclear Disarmament* (London: Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, 1962).

47 UA *Newsheet*, August 1962, 4.

48 UA *Newsheet*, October 1962, 2.

49 UA *Newsheet*, November 1962, 2.

50 Ibid.

The Peace movement became a sustained presence on the *Newsheet* pages – with at least one article and one speaker each month through 1963 – with rising anxiety and widening support as the Vietnam War escalated and the threat of nuclear testing loomed ever closer to home. By October 1963, it had become clear that not only were the British and the United States undertaking the testing of H-Bombs, but the French were planning to test a hydrogen bomb on their South Pacific colonial territories.⁵¹ In the first issue of 1964, along with the news items about Burma, Ceylon, Uganda and Japan, the *Newsheet* reported that Jean Richards would speak on 20 February to the UA about the Quakers' petition to persuade French President de Gaulle to reverse this plan. The ALP Labor Women's Organising Committee conference, held on 22 and 23 February, condemned the French plan to test H-Bombs and stressed the urgency of implementing ALP policy for a nuclear-free zone in the South Pacific. At the same time, over 50 Australian women 'prominent in public and professional life' had signed a petition that called on de Gaulle to call off the tests.⁵² Lucy and Elsie Rivett were both signatories, but it was to be the last public task that they shared – Elsie died in May.

After 1963, the *Newsheet* took a more cautious approach to overt politics. It may have been the impact of the Sino-Soviet rift, about which Lucy expressed concern in her letters to Rewi late in 1963.⁵³ Outside the UA, Lucy maintained her own commitment to the Peace movement, speaking and actively campaigning until her death. But the *Newsheet* no longer took such an activist position as it had in 1962 and '63. While the issue of French testing in the South Pacific remained, along with peace and decolonisation, the *Newsheets* focused more on individual women like the teacher and activist Helen Joseph (1905–1992) who consistently spoke against apartheid in South Africa.⁵⁴ Certainly, there were still individual speakers on international peace, like Phyl Latona in August 1964, and international racial conflicts, like Margaret Brink in March 1964. In relation to racism inside Australia, the UA also invited individuals to speak on the themes, like Charles Perkins and Faith Bandler, rather than taking part in actual campaigning. There was, however, little mention of the eventual tests at Mururoa Atoll beginning in 1966, of the massacres

51 UA *Newsheet*, October 1963, 1.

52 *Tribune*, 26 February 1964.

53 Lucy Woodcock to Rewi Alley, 19 December 1963, Rewi Alley Papers, NLNZ.

54 Ameen Akhalwaya, 'Helen Joseph, Obituary', *Independent*, 28 December 1992, www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-helen-joseph-1565649.html, accessed 2 January 2019.

in Indonesia in 1965–66 in which Gerwani was destroyed nor of the Six-Day War in the Middle East in June 1967. Yet the speakers at the UA luncheons in 1967 notably included both those giving the Israeli view (in August) and those giving the Palestinian view (in September) of the conflict.

The UA sustained the pressure on its focal issues like Equal Pay and opportunity for women, continuing to demand better recognition of nursing as a professional career, but it developed many of its themes to meet changing times. Automation became an issue in the *Newsheets* and the UA raised those needs of working women that would ensure equal access to work, like adequate high-quality childcare and support for single mothers, along with removal of the punitive treatment of unwed mothers in society generally as well as in the workforce. The presence – or absence – of women on boards was a constant theme, with major attention directed at the structures of the new Macquarie University, which the UA – and Lucy directly – argued should address the needs of women to retrain as mature-aged students in order to return to the workforce. This pressure was probably one of the more successful aspects of the UA work, and, like the question of training of childcare workers, it linked to Lucy's long commitment to women's education.

Her role as president continued and Lucy contributed many hours particularly to the *Newsheet*, as Vivienne Newson recalled in her moving tribute to Lucy after her death in February 1968. Lucy not only wrote hundreds of letters, but also was always ahead of deadlines to contribute articles and reports, Newson recalled. But more than this, she was drawn into the tedious work of dealing with rising rents, remodelling to fit the UA work into smaller premises and negotiating with landlords and tradesmen over the changes.

Newson recalled what working with Lucy had been like:

When she related interesting incidents from her crowded, vital life, we would press her to write her memoirs, but, inevitably, her great generosity left her a prey to all who came to her for assistance with various projects or for her wise counsel and sympathy, so that, in the end, all her waking moments were filled – alas! – to the exclusion of her memoirs.⁵⁵

55 UA *Newsheet*, April–May 1968, 2.

This text is taken from *Teacher for Justice: Lucy Woodcock's Transnational Life*, by Heather Goodall, Helen Randerson and Devleena Ghosh, published 2019 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.