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# The feminist side of the League of Nations

On 12 May 1919, Eleanor Moore arrived in Zurich after overcoming many hurdles in attempting to make the congress on time. She had sailed for 10 weeks on the *Themistocles* from Australia, and misplaced letters jeopardised her carefully planned accommodation bookings. When she arrived in Europe she discovered that the conference location had changed to an entirely different country, fortuitously finding the news in the London *Daily Express*.<sup>1</sup> Arriving finally in Switzerland she found no train to Zurich until the morning of the conference. It moved at a crawl because of postwar shortages.

By the afternoon she had entered the congress building. After months of planning and weeks of travelling, she had arrived on the afternoon of the first day of proceedings, ready to speak on behalf of pacifist women of Australia. She had with her a package with signatures of Australian subscribers to table with the secretariat, to show the genuine commitment of enfranchised Australian women to international peace and disarmament.<sup>2</sup> Moore was excited to meet the women of the organising committee, with whom she had corresponded for years but never seen.

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1 Eleanor M Moore, *The Quest for Peace, As I Have Known It in Australia* (Melbourne, 1948), 48. Change of conference venue reported in 'The Need of the Moment', *Daily Express*, London, 30 April 1919.

2 Memorial from the Sisterhood, Melbourne Australia to the International Congress of Women, The Hague, May 1919, series III reel 54, WILPF International Papers 1915–1978, Sanford, NC: Microfilming Corp. of America, c 1983, accessed at the National Library of Australia (NLA). Hereafter referred to as WILPF Papers.

She slipped into the back of the gathering after giving her name and credentials, no doubt relieved she had only missed one morning and the trip generously funded by the women of the Sisterhood in Melbourne was not in vain. She watched in awe as the face she recognised from photos, Jane Addams, stood from her position as chairperson to interrupt the current speaker:

I want to interrupt the business to make an announcement.  
A delegate from Australia has arrived after ten weeks of travel.  
Will Miss Moore come up on the platform and let us all look at her?<sup>3</sup>

‘Such moments are unforgettable’, she recalled.<sup>4</sup> Overcome with emotion she reflected: ‘when I tried to respond to the words of greeting and the round of applause little would come but a whisper’.<sup>5</sup> Yet, this moment clarified in her mind the importance of her work. She had made it there ‘and to the very day!’ She was a ‘crusader’ for this new ‘glowing religion’ that would ‘transform humanity’. Moore was now part of the group committed to rebuilding hope after such a devastating war. And she would commit all her effort to achieve this through internationalism, alongside the wonderful women of the world present at the 1919 conference in Zurich.

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The fighting ended on 11 November 1918, which to Moore proved ‘how completely the operation of war is within the control of its directors and how perfectly able men are to stop it whenever they will’.<sup>6</sup> After the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, internationalism was institutionalised with the creation of the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization (ILO), which were written into the Treaty of Versailles.<sup>7</sup> Involvement with internationalism was distinctly gendered. Government delegates, usually male, had their paths smoothed by institutional arrangements of state diplomacy. Independent women did not have this support. Many were required to self-fund their journeys, overcoming the hurdles of expense and distance with the force of their personal connection to expanding internationalism. They travelled ‘to understand and change

3 Jane Addams at the International Women’s Peace Congress, Zurich 1919, quoted in Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 50.

4 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 50.

5 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 50.

6 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 45.

7 Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 50, doi.org/10.9783/9780812207781.

the world', refusing to be mere tourists with 'eyes fixed on monuments and ruins'.<sup>8</sup> Despite practical obstacles and their lack of official accreditation, many of which actually expanded their experiences and commitment to internationalism, their engagement with the League of Nations was much more fruitful than some have assumed. The League of Nations fostered a 'new paradigm of public diplomacy', that 'showcased the importance of informal connections and networks, of expertise and technical know-how'.<sup>9</sup> After the 1919 conference that formally established the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) structure, they were well placed to capitalise on this new paradigm. They clearly cultivated and utilised informal networks to influence the political agenda.

An Australian delegate to a WILPF conference in 1926, Amelia Lambrick, saw WILPF as: really a feminist side of the League of Nations, and I try to imagine the secretary of the League of Nations attempting to carry on in anything like such circumstances as our secretaries have to accept and make best of.<sup>10</sup>

The international section enjoyed this characterisation, and agreed. '[T]his is a miniature League of Nations and therefore there is always the problem of how to make the different nationalities understand each other and come to an agreement'.<sup>11</sup> Their organisation ran in parallel, navigated similar organisational issues as the official League of Nations, and tried as best it could to have a presence on the main stage, despite knowledge that their dissent, and their contribution to the debate, may be ignored. It encouraged women to start questioning national interests to facilitate international agreement, something Australian WILPF women soon began to do.

This 'miniature League of Nations' preceded the official League of Nations by a full year, as the postwar meeting of the International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace (ICWPP), held in May 1919, was where the group was formally established. It was then that they took the new name Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and voted on a new constitution. The significance of that postwar women's peace meeting, the first that Australian delegates were able to attend, calls for

8 Ros Pesman, *Duty Free: Australian Women Abroad* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996), 109.

9 Madeleine Herren, 'Gender and International Relations Through the Lens of the League of Nations (1919–1945)', in *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics since 1500*, ed. Carolyn James and Glenda Sluga (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2016), 183, doi.org/10.4324/9781315713113-12.

10 Moore referring to Lambrick, letter to the Secretary of WILPF, 19 April 1927, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

11 International Secretary to Moore, 1 July 1927, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

closer attention. This chapter follows the journeys of three Australian delegates, Eleanor Moore, Vida Goldstein and Cecilia John, to understand how that formative conference solidified the legacy of WILPF organising in Australia. These women all navigated the practical pressures of being an internationalist after the war, from financial commitments and travel complications to issues of communication and cross-cultural relationships. Their experiences demonstrate that the journey was a very important aspect of their development as international citizens, as it presented the opportunity for an experiential engagement with political realities. What they saw and learned in their months of travel was as important as the experience of the three-day congress because it expanded and shaped their understanding of internationalism.

## The ICWPP and the 1919 Congress

While the ICWPP organising committee gained purpose and strength during the war, setting out with determination to organise the Zurich congress, it was greatly constrained by the strict wartime controls and the limitations of global communication. The Sisterhood in Australia noted in its reports how the communication had become strained by conditions in Europe, with the international journal reduced in frequency by ‘lack of funds’ and ‘difficulties of postal communication’.<sup>12</sup> Sea-lanes of communication were becoming precarious—in essence, nationalism was cutting the tendons and circulatory system of internationalism. This exacerbated the Australian section’s sense of ‘separateness’ from the larger branches overseas.<sup>13</sup>

Women organising in other nations had been targeted for their pacifist activities during the war, which hampered recruitment. The Italian section fought against police action because of a petition they started, while German women returning from the 1915 congress were temporarily imprisoned.<sup>14</sup> Most sections experienced hostility for advocating peace and opposing the war effort. Yet despite the difficulty in organising during this time, many national sections managed to engage with the international committee

12 SIP Annual report 1917, 4 April 1917, WILPF papers Box 1730/9 MS 9377, State Library of Victoria (SLV).

13 Malcolm Saunders, ‘Are Women More Peaceful than Men? The Experience of the Australian Section of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, 1915–39’, *Interdisciplinary Peace Research* 3, no. 1 (1 May 1991): 58, doi.org/10.1080/14781159108412732.

14 GC Bussey, and Margaret Tims, *Pioneers for Peace: Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, 1915–1965*, 2nd ed. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1965), 28.

enough to encourage the organising of the 1919 congress, and to commit to sending delegates. The ICWPP even tried to reach out to other nations not represented, sending 'friendly correspondence with peace loving women of China and Japan' recognising their lack of racial diversity and the desire for an international organisation representative of all nations.<sup>15</sup> No Japanese women attended the Zurich conference, though Japan eventually joined WILPF as a national section in 1924.<sup>16</sup> The number of countries participating in the ICWPP had grown since 1915, with the largest delegations in 1919 coming from Germany, Britain and the USA.<sup>17</sup>

The huge workload of correspondence that the ICWPP sent and received to organise the conference shows how difficult the commitment to international organising was at this time. Distance exacerbated the logistical hurdles for the Australians, whose commitment to attend reveals the strength of their dedication to engage in the international arena. Sending and receiving mail could take months, while gaining access to telegrams and speedy communication were difficult due to their ad hoc office arrangements. There was no real office, just the homes of the most devoted, and subscribing to newsletters and funding work and travel was prohibitively expensive.<sup>18</sup> Yet none of this curbed the Sisterhood and the Peace Army's enthusiasm. The Sisterhood began preparations for the conference from the beginning of 1916, choosing and debating who should be the delegate.

Leading up to the announcement of the congress there was eager communication between Australia and the international committee. The ICWPP pursued collective decision-making by mailing ballots for voting for the chairman and vice-chairman, for increasing the Board of Officers, for electing delegates to that board, for decisions for the time of the meetings, and even for decisions on the country in which organising meetings should take place.<sup>19</sup> At this stage, the Sisterhood and the Peace Army were still communicating as separate organisations, and were not

15 SIP Annual report 1917, 4 April 1917, WILPF papers Box 1730/9 MS 9377, SLV.

16 Leila J Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 18, doi.org/10.1515/9780691221816.

17 Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*, 29.

18 Evidence in the WILPF international archive shows the 'Opened by the Censor' tags that were attached to all international mail that the SIP received, which would have prolonged the process of sending and receiving letters. Series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

19 Ballot paper for the ICWPP, received by SIP, 7 March 1917, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

pooling resources to send the delegates. The Peace Army had begun a 'Peace Delegation Fund' in January 1919, identifying their delegates as Vida Goldstein and Cecilia John, who were elected in 1917.<sup>20</sup>

## Australian women and their journeys

By January 1919, the ICWPP had sent cables notifying of the intention to call the conference, but without times, places or dates.<sup>21</sup> The Sisterhood and the Peace Army delegates braced themselves to receive notification at any time that would take them on their journeys. The Peace Army's funding plea for assistance appeared in the *Woman Voter* many times on the front page during 1919, as the urgency of finance became clear and they pressed the need to have Australia adequately represented by experienced women.<sup>22</sup>

These delegates were propelled on their trips by the collective mobilisation of small donations from committed individuals. This pattern of funding is revealing of the character of the organisation and its members. It also shows the major difference between official forms of international commitment, undertaken by men's and women's internationalism. These women's organisations worked outside of state sponsorship and had no access to official funding. They relied on membership fees and personal donations to operate their secretariats, organise their communication and fund their overseas representations. They all relied heavily on volunteer labour for the duties required to keep the organisations functioning. They had little access to office spaces and often the work (especially in the case of the Sisterhood) would be done in private residences, where all the material would also be stored, which fostered the dominance of a core group of the membership. Relying on private funding also had a gendered disadvantage, as most women involved were not independently wealthy and had limited access to paid work. The Sisterhood was in a similar situation to the Peace Army in needing to collect contributions, especially as Moore was not able to pay for the trip for herself. The Sisterhood similarly raised money from members.<sup>23</sup>

20 Vida Goldstein, 'Women's Peace Delegation to Europe', *Woman Voter*, 30 January 1919, 1.

21 Vida Goldstein, 'Women's Peace Congress, Australian Representation', *Woman Voter*, 16 January 1919, 1.

22 Goldstein, 'Women's Peace Delegation to Europe', 1.

23 £180 had been collected, plus private loans of £70 to be repaid. Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 46.

The call came quickly for the delegates, and despite their anticipation, it still caught them off guard. Moore received the cablegram on 28 February 1919 to say that the congress would be on 19 May in Holland.<sup>24</sup> She frantically rushed to the shipping department and was able to gain passage to Europe on the *Themistocles*, which was scheduled to leave on 5 March, giving only five days for preparation, passport application and arrangements of appropriate funds. The Peace Army similarly scrambled to organise the timely passage of their delegates. They published in the *Woman Voter* how 'peace found us unready for the speedy sending of two delegates on the long and expensive journey necessary to land them at the European centre of deliberations'.<sup>25</sup> There seemed still to be confusion about the actual time and place of the congress, as the Peace Army believed the starting date to be 5 May, and thought the place was to be Berne, Switzerland.<sup>26</sup> Goldstein and John booked their passage on the *Orsova*, which left on 24 March.<sup>27</sup> Despite conflicting reports of the congress being in France, Holland or Switzerland, the three delegates sailed in the direction of Europe with the vague understanding of the congress opening around the beginning of May. Such haphazard communication and confirmation about details were clearly a major obstacle to their internationalism. Their travel itineraries were sorted on arrival and made more precarious considering their shoestring budgets.

Money remained a concern throughout the journey for all three Australians. The Peace Army continued to appeal for funds and donations after Goldstein and John had departed, noting 'the appeal ... remains therefore, in view of the necessity for continued endeavour, and must remain until much more money than has yet been received is obtained'.<sup>28</sup> Both travelling parties recorded how on occasion, without the hospitality and generosity of others sympathetic of their cause, they would have found themselves without food or adequate accommodation.<sup>29</sup> Ros Pesman has noted how it 'has been customary to represent women's travel as transgression' despite women having always been on the move.<sup>30</sup> That many travelling WILPF women were older, confident and middle class made it easier for them to challenge the travelling woman taboo and assert their own agenda. But there were

24 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 46.

25 'Women's Peace Congress', *Woman Voter*, 27 March 1919, 1.

26 'Women's Peace Congress', *Woman Voter*, 27 March 1919, 1.

27 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 46.

28 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 48. 'Women's Peace Congress', *Woman Voter*, 27 March 1919, 1.

29 Goldstein, 'if it had not been for the kindness of a personal friend of mine, our predicament would have been trying', *Woman Voter*, 7 August 1919, 3.

30 Pesman, *Duty Free*, 6.

still limitations, as unaccompanied women travellers often had to balance societal concerns and anxieties about their welfare and protection. Goldstein and Moore made clear that, despite close calls and honest difficulties, their travels never compromised their respectability.

Travelling through Europe immediately after the war without official recognition and travel approval from the establishment was not easy. Moore described how 'days of great stress and anxiety followed, most of the time being fruitlessly spent in legations waiting for permits which did not come.'<sup>31</sup> Yet both parties were stoic about the obstacles that made their travels stressful and complicated. Goldstein recognised their privilege in spite of the hardship by stating 'it is a wonderful thing to go forth and see the world'.<sup>32</sup> She also wrote how unavoidable the inconveniences were, but not prohibitive to their goals, as internationalism was superior because it brought together the best from all parts of the world, and that was only possible with travel:

to bring about the new thing requires the counsel of wise heads and of noble hearts. Such heads and hearts to come together in conclave require—shall we put it so?—the sinews of travel.<sup>33</sup>

Their commitment to internationalism was deepened by the incurred cost of physical hardship and sacrifice.

Moore's experiences in 1919 were in stark contrast to her previous travel from 1905. She had been to Europe with her sister and found that her identity as a white traveller allowed her to move from country to country without restriction: 'no official permission was needed for any movement anywhere. No passport was required, and from first to last not a single form had to be filled in.'<sup>34</sup> The situation had since changed. The experience of the war imposed visa restrictions, meaning paperwork, passport photos and having 'papers examined and fresh forms filled in' at every junction extended her journey, which was cause for significant worry.<sup>35</sup> It illustrated the hardship of self-sponsored internationalism, and the changed social conditions of Europe. World War I saw the strengthening of national borders

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31 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 49.

32 Vida Goldstein, 'Letters from Miss Goldstein', *Woman Voter*, 3 July 1919, 2.

33 'Women's Peace Congress', *Woman Voter*, 27 March 1919, 1.

34 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 47.

35 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 49.



and tightened regulation of movement between countries. It also led to a sharp increase in the state's oversight of its citizens with the development of passports exemplifying this trend.<sup>36</sup>

After Moore had arrived in England, she was surprised to learn through reading a newspaper that the congress had been moved to Zurich. She quickly adjusted her plans so she would arrive in Geneva where she would be able to catch a train to Zurich and arrive at the conference on the afternoon that it opened.<sup>37</sup> Goldstein and John were not so lucky. There remains a detailed record of their journey, as Goldstein wrote many letters that were published in full in the *Woman Voter*, often given their own section titled 'Letters From Europe'.<sup>38</sup> Their ship had planned to arrive at Naples but was diverted, arriving instead in England, adding days to the journey. Their voyage was frequently held up at ports, because of new quarantine measures to stop the spread of influenza, which caused Goldstein to hold a 'grudge against the medical profession for the absurd laws it has laid down in its fear of influenza'.<sup>39</sup> Goldstein was annoyed at such an impediment to their journey. She was quite unused to such extreme measures to address medical issues, and as a Christian Scientist she disapproved of medical interventions on religious grounds, especially non-consensual and enforced examinations.<sup>40</sup>

The influenza pandemic of 1918–19, also known as the 'Spanish flu', was widespread and devastating, with some 40 to 50 million people dying of the infection in less than a year.<sup>41</sup> Australia introduced protective measures like the maritime quarantine that was effective in controlling the outbreak. The delay, exclusion and inspection of foreign ships limited the pandemic to less than 0.8 deaths per 1,000.<sup>42</sup> Again, like the experience Moore had with tighter controls on visas and movement across borders, rapid and radical changes to the way people moved around the world were being enforced as a result of the war. New Zealand was hit hard by the epidemic, and this gave Australia more resolve in instituting the tight restrictions: officials declared that 'there is no need for panic in Victoria, or in Australia generally, but

36 AJP Taylor, *English History, 1914–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 2.

37 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 49.

38 Vida Goldstein, 'Letters from Europe', *Woman Voter*, 7 August 1919, 3.

39 Vida Goldstein, 'Letter from Miss Goldstein', *Woman Voter*, 22 May 1919, 1.

40 Leslie Henderson, *The Goldstein Story* (North Melbourne: Stockland Press, 1973), 72.

41 Michael BA Oldstone, *Viruses, Plagues, and History: Past, Present, and Future* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 306.

42 Oldstone, *Viruses, Plagues, and History*, 308.

there is great need for preparedness.<sup>43</sup> The restrictions affected not only the ability to travel, but the domestic political atmosphere by banning public gatherings, which interrupted the activities of the peace movement. The Sisterhood noted this in a letter to the international section: 'our work has been hampered by the influenza epidemic of 1919, during which all public meetings were forbidden.'<sup>44</sup>

Keeping in touch required careful monitoring of the timing of incoming and outgoing mail in each port. Goldstein constantly reported how difficult it was to receive messages and time the letters she was writing; 'if I am to catch tomorrow's mail, I must hurry on'.<sup>45</sup> On reaching London they were as surprised as Moore to find the place and city of the congress had changed, and the description of their efforts to make it to Zurich convey a similarly stressful experience of seeking permits and passages. With understanding officials, they were able to have their visas approved quickly, though again the process was trying: 'the passport business began downright in earnest. There we sat, row upon row, waiting our turn, first with one official, then with another, and with another, and with another, and so on, until one felt exactly like—well, I had better not say what, because my friends, the censors, might not allow it to pass!'<sup>46</sup> Through Paris, they arrived in Zurich by 15 May, four days after the opening. Goldstein acknowledged that Moore arrived before them, but perhaps in a moment of old rivalry was quick to point out that she left three weeks before them.<sup>47</sup>

## The conference in Zurich

Benedict Anderson interpreted early twentieth-century internationalism as an expressive form of nationalism in his work *Imagined Communities*.<sup>48</sup> He saw the League of Nations as legitimising the nation-state as norm, a place where 'even the surviving imperial powers came dressed in national costume rather than imperial uniform.'<sup>49</sup> This perceived potential for exacerbating

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43 'Spanish Influenza, Pneumonia Real Danger, Need for Precautions', *The Argus*, 23 November 1918, 21.

44 'WILPF Report, 1919–1921, Australian Section—branches Melbourne, Hobart, Rockhampton, Melbourne', 15 March 1931, WILPF papers Box 1730/9, MS 9377, SLV.

45 Goldstein, 'Letters from Europe', 3.

46 Goldstein, 'Letters from Europe', 3.

47 Goldstein, 'Letters from Europe', 3.

48 Benedict R O'G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 1983), 113.

49 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 154.

national interests was one of the major concerns that WILPF had about the proposed League of Nations. It also represents one of the main anxieties that internationalists had about the theory of world government: that unless a genuine attempt at collaboration was enforced by the institution, it would never live up to that ideal. Therefore, in organising their own congress, WILPF was conscious of designing a space that represented more than the coming together of national sections. It specifically set up an international section as well as national sections to encourage a spirit of transnationalism.<sup>50</sup> Delegates and executive members, while elected by national sections, were not expected to promote their national interests, or speak as citizens of any country. Once the Zurich conference decided to take the name WILPF, the delegates determined that the international section would be set up in Geneva alongside the League of Nations headquarters, being 'from its foundation an international body and not simply a federation of national sections.'<sup>51</sup> As Eleanor Moore recalled, the atmosphere was one of cooperation, where there was 'a sense that something real has been achieved and that the occasion is epoch-making.'<sup>52</sup>

Every effort was made to overcome the impulse for nationalism in the international setting. Women from 'belligerent' countries were encouraged to be the ones to denounce the wrongs of their nations; 'it was the German women who denounced the invasion of Belgium, the deportations ... it was the women from the Allied countries who denounced the blockade and the injustices of the Peace Treaty'.<sup>53</sup> This approach differed from the equivalent official conferences by actively encouraging the international perspective—incorporating views from neutral countries and countries on both sides of conflict. In contrast, the Paris Peace Conference ended with the 'Big Four'—the United States, France, the United Kingdom and Italy—making decisions, all nations from the Allied side. Some historians have even argued, echoing these women from the 1919 conference, that the groundwork for the Second World War was laid down at this stage by denying Germany a voice in negotiations, thereby disenfranchising them. WILPF prided itself on this exceptional origin and explicitly credited its success and cohesion

50 Jo Vellacott, 'A Place for Pacifism and Transnationalism in Feminist Theory: The Early Work of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom', *Women's History Review* 2, no. 1 (March 1993): 33, doi.org/10.1080/09612029300200021.

51 Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*, 32.

52 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 51.

53 Vellacott, 'A Place for Pacifism and Transnationalism in Feminist Theory', 33.

during the war to the fact that it was international first, and national only as a practicality. President Jane Addams explained this in a conference talk at Honolulu in 1928, which Moore recounted in a letter:

Our League was different from other international societies, in that others usually were formed by a number of separate groups linking up to organise an international centre, but that ours began with an international centre or nucleus, and all the national groups have been formed from that. This peculiarity seems worth preserving, because it means that we are not a set of national bodies trying to be international if we can and liable to fly apart in times of special tensions (as so many so-called international societies did during the war), but we are international in our very nature and our only real reason for being 'national' at all is that we are trying to permeate the people we live amongst with the international spirit, and to get that spirit expressed in the enactments of the various governments.<sup>54</sup>

It was impossible to completely overcome nationalist tendencies. Moore noted how the congress overall was dominated by 'European-mindedness, or, to be exact, North-West-Central-European-mindedness'.<sup>55</sup> She saw this as understandable given the circumstances, but felt it necessary to draw attention to it when a resolution was accepted endorsing universal free trade without debate. Moore wrote a note after the congress that was published in the proceedings report outlining the detrimental effects this would have for Australia.<sup>56</sup> Her discussion of the idea of 'universal free trade', and the adherence to the issue of self-determination, shows how much her own national experience was present in her engagement with WILPF International. Despite their best intentions, in such a diverse group comprising so many different cultures, each delegate was shaped and influenced by their national experiences. Vestigial respect for national self-interest was difficult to dismiss.

The Zurich congress was an important gathering for the women's peace movement. But it also held wider significance as it was the first international gathering to consider the resolutions of the Paris Peace Conference and to provide comment on the Treaty of Versailles and the Covenant for the

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54 Moore recounting a talk by Jane Addams, letter to WILPF secretary, 13 March 1929, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

55 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 53.

56 Eleanor Moore, 'A Note on Free Access to Raw Materials and Free Trade', in *The Women's International Congress, Zurich 12–17 May 1919: Towards Peace and Freedom*, WILPF Publication, accessed through database edited by Kathryn Kish Sklar and Thomas Dublin, *Women and Social Movements, International—1840 to Present*, 485.

League of Nations.<sup>57</sup> The women passed resolutions giving their thoughts on the treaty and covenant with recommendations for action to make them effective. Their unanimous verdict on the Peace Treaty was that it was harsh and detrimental, and that the discord it entrenched ‘can only lead to future wars’.<sup>58</sup> There was more debate over the League of Nations Covenant, which proved to be the most contentious of all debates at Zurich. WILPF supported international government, thought to be one of the most effective ways to avert another war. It believed in the principles of a League of Nations as something that would exemplify their internationalism, creating a new stage for political development and a space that would command a higher loyalty than nationalism; ‘not only of affection for the native land, but of loyalty to the Society of Nations’.<sup>59</sup>

However, what was proposed for the new League was a long way from what these women campaigned for. They felt it was far removed from the ‘14 points’ proposed by US President Wilson, which they believed were greatly influenced by their resolutions from 1915.<sup>60</sup> The British delegation wrote their criticisms in the congress publication, which again showed how complex their engagement with these issues was—they understood the complexities of nationalism and internationalism working together, but saw a way for them to coexist, protecting each nation from the exploitation of another:

We recognise first that the sentiment of nationality exists and manifests itself in many ways, political, linguistic, religious, racial, artistic; we take into account as actually existing this great factor in the motives of humanity, and many of us believe also that it greatly enriches thought and emotion, and do not wish to see it weakened ... We recognise in the second place, therefore, that international organisation of some kind is necessary in order to prevent the carious nationals from exploiting or oppressing each other.<sup>61</sup>

57 Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*, 31.

58 Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*, 31.

59 Vellacott, ‘A Place for Pacifism and Transnationalism in Feminist Theory’, 35.

60 Jane Addams quoted in *Woman Voter*, 1 September 1919, 1.

61 *The Women's International Congress, Zurich May 12–17 1919: Towards Peace and Freedom*, WILPF Publication, Sklar and Dublin, *Women and Social Movements*, 14. ‘Democracy and the League of Nations’ by HM Swanwick, MA, WILPF papers Box 1745, MS 9377, SLV.

Most at the congress were extremely disappointed with the proposed League of Nations. Some believed that in the form it was proposed, attached to the detrimental Peace Treaty, it would 'prove worse than useless as an international instrument' and should have been renounced by the congress.<sup>62</sup> Others were more optimistic, believing it was an imperfect step in the right direction and to be encouraged. After careful discussion the Zurich congress came to a resolution that proposed changes and recommendations to the covenant, which they intended to send to the official governments through elected envoys.

The Zurich conference also dealt with procedural matters, renaming the organisation, setting up the infrastructure for the newly named WILPF, electing office bearers Jane Addams (USA) as president, Helena Swanwick (UK) and Lida Gustava Heymann (Germany) as vice-presidents, and Emily Greene Balch (USA) as international secretary. Moore was very impressed with the women at the conference, even overwhelmed by the highly respected names of women leaders in their professional fields and made special note to say how much she admired them. Of note to her was Addams, who 'stands in [her] estimation as the greatest human being I have ever met', and others whom she had already corresponded with such as Jeannette Rankin from America, who was the first woman elected to the US Congress.<sup>63</sup>

The Sisterhood and Peace Army rivalry no longer seemed to be such a pertinent issue for the three Australian delegates. When they were at the Zurich congress together, they graciously shared notes to ensure the majority of people from Australia heard the news of the conference. As Moore had arrived earlier and was able to transcribe notes from the first few days, the *Woman Voter* acknowledged her for supplying them with articles, such as Addams' address that it printed in full.<sup>64</sup> Goldstein noted that they were encouraged and supported by each other, writing; 'It was good to see an Australian comrade in that great gathering. Seats were found for us with her, and we felt there was quite a home atmosphere around our table.'<sup>65</sup>

The Australians came prepared for the congress, putting together a memorial to be tabled that included reports from their meetings and petitions from Australian women in support of the conference

62 Vellacott, 'A Place for Pacifism and Transnationalism in Feminist Theory', 33.

63 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 50. Moore to Ms J Rankin, USA, 5 June 1917, WILPF papers Box 1723/3, MS 9377, SLV.

64 'Addams Address', *Woman Voter*, 1 September 1919, 1.

65 Vida Goldstein, 'Letters from Miss Goldstein', *Woman Voter*, 1 September 1919, 4.

deliberations.<sup>66</sup> As Australian women had the vote, their presence and expertise were seen as exotic and Moore was asked to give an evening speech on 13 May to a dinner about Australian Suffrage.<sup>67</sup> This speech was Moore's opportunity to convey her experience and doubts about the inherent peacefulness of women. Her talk began by noting how once women started to vote, none of the 'dreadful results predicted', that women would become unfeminine, or that it would destroy family life, came to pass. Nor would disaster ensure when all nations had given women the vote. But she then started on a more practical note arguing the suffrage did not fulfil all the prophecies women thought it would either:

Woman suffrage having been once established among us, no one has ever raised an agitation to have it repealed. On the other hand, we cannot claim that the woman's vote has done all that some expected or hoped from it ... A large section of the women had no confidence in their own judgement, and allowed the strength of their vote to be drawn wholly into the party politics of the day, in which any special value it might have had was lost.<sup>68</sup>

Moore's solution was education. Her address concluded by stressing that women would only use the vote to their best ability when they had been educated on how to do so:

To you younger women of Switzerland who eagerly look forward to voting, I would say, gain the right as soon as you can, use it, but do not overestimate its power. Think out now what your principles are to be on the great questions of the time, then remember that in giving you a vote, your country asks for *your* thought, not that of some relative, or orator, or newspaper. It has those already.<sup>69</sup>

Despite these differences, the congress overall seemed to have deeply affected all the Australian delegates, shown in the way that they described the events to their constituents back home. They actively engaged in the deliberations and related their experiences. Overall they found the experience challenging and worthwhile, reaffirming their internationalism. Moore noted that the

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66 Memorial from the Sisterhood, Melbourne Australia to the International Congress of Women, The Hague, May 1919, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

67 *The Women's International Congress, Zurich 12–17 May 1919: Towards Peace and Freedom*, WILPF Publication, Sklar and Dublin, *Women and Social Movements*, 199.

68 Eleanor Moore, 'Women Suffrage in Relation to Permanent Peace', speech given 13 May 1919, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers. Printed in *The Women's International Congress, Zurich 12–17 May 1919: Towards Peace and Freedom*, WILPF Publication, Sklar and Dublin, *Women and Social Movements*, 199.

69 Moore, 'Women Suffrage in Relation to Permanent Peace', speech given 13 May 1919, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

greatest thing to observe was that the debates and interactions between nationals were characterised by 'a persistent refusal to be dominated by inflamed race feeling', something that confirmed to her the potential for internationalism.<sup>70</sup>

Aside from the emotional significance of the congress, it was also productive in terms of output. Thirty-seven resolutions were passed, with twenty-two more proposals recommended for study that were unable to be voted on because of time constraints.<sup>71</sup> The resolutions were to be sent to the official governments as evidence of the work they had put in to create a lasting and constructive peace. However, like the output of the first conference in 1915, only US President Wilson acknowledged the resolutions.<sup>72</sup> While they were forwarded to all delegates and governments represented at Versailles, the silence made the women realise 'it is doubtful if it even raised a blush'.<sup>73</sup>

In addition to their rebuff from more official streams of international diplomacy, WILPF constantly struggled to make themselves heard as they were not part of official delegations. Organising exclusively along gender lines meant that they often had to battle the prejudiced view that women were inherently ill equipped to contribute to the complex world of international relations. Women involved in WILPF were aware of the pressure placed on them to prove their abilities to consider international relations and set about demonstrating them. According to Moore, the Sisterhood had taken the task very seriously since its inception:

Urgent, indeed, was our need of all the knowledge we could gather, for at every utterance on this subject, whether in public or private, we were pelted with indignant objections and derisive questions. As a member once aptly remarked: 'pacifists are expected to be trained logicians, but anyone can be a militarist'.<sup>74</sup>

Regardless of their efforts, the establishment and even other women's groups did not usually see them in the light that they had hoped. They were constantly at risk of being sidelined into roles and issues that were seen as specific to women, matters that statesmen would expect to occupy their time. Once the Geneva office was set up it was constantly deluged by appeals

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70 Malcolm Saunders, *Quiet Dissenter: The Life and Thought of an Australian Pacifist: Eleanor May Moore 1875–1949* (Canberra: Peace Research Centre, Australian National University, 1993), 124.

71 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 51.

72 Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*, 33.

73 Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*, 31.

74 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 41.



for humanitarian aid and for urgent reconstruction or postwar causes.<sup>75</sup> The international section of WILPF stressed that its role was political and not as an organisation for crisis relief. While they responded as best they could to these requests they only actively engaged where they could see an opportunity at a political level, as they knew their resources were better targeted at their core purpose rather than at direct services that would never be able to stretch to all that needed help. They also believed strongly that it would be better to 'tackle the causes of such tragedies, of which war was the greatest, rather than apply first aid after the event'.<sup>76</sup>

## Travelling home

The 1919 congress was an important focal point for the women of WILPF as it brought them together to create the organisation that they would commit to advancing locally. Yet the organised proceedings were only scheduled for three days, and the pressures of time meant restrictions on debate and many motions were passed en bloc. As most delegates travelled for much longer than the allocated time they engaged, the personal connections and the travel proved to be just as revealing of their motivations, and the internationalising process, as the deliberations.

When the congress was over, getting home quickly was not guaranteed for the travelling Australians. Moore spent some time in Paris, after which she went back to London only to find that 'there was no hope of passage to Australia for months to come'.<sup>77</sup> Resigned to the fact that she would have to spend more time abroad waiting for news of a passage home, she undertook a Summer School at Cambridge, and another at Oxford. Spending time in different company, and again accepting the hospitality of acquaintances, she recalled many stories of people and fellow travellers that made her time memorable. Her insistence on recording the detail of people and places was to make the point that 'various nationalities and cultures can and do associate when they have opportunity to do so'.<sup>78</sup> She received an invitation from Emily Greene Balch, the new secretary of WILPF in Geneva, to volunteer at the international bureau, but once again had difficulty getting there. To Moore, the barrier of passports and borders was more than

75 Vellacott, 'A Place for Pacifism and Transnationalism in Feminist Theory', 41.

76 Vellacott, 'A Place for Pacifism and Transnationalism in Feminist Theory', 41.

77 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 57.

78 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 60.

just an inconvenience. It was 'obstruction-mongering' that intentionally thwarted the impulses found when people were able to 'move about freely, find affinities and form ties which are of lasting pleasure and benefit on both sides.'<sup>79</sup> This practical representation of nationalism demonstrated a 'hardening of the heart and a narrowing of the mind', causing her to muse 'we are meant to be servants one of another, not of abstract collectivities.'<sup>80</sup>

Moore made it once more to Switzerland, where she worked and lived with Balch for eight weeks. Together they readied material from the conference for publication. Her descriptions of this time show a sense of acceptance in the 'harmonious international circle' that she found around herself.<sup>81</sup> Her bond with Balch became a lasting friendship: she described their working styles as suiting each other 'excellently'. Moore began to have troubles with her health, and when she received notice that passage back to Australia was available she made the decision to return home. The time spent at the international headquarters elevated Moore's commitment to internationalism to new heights. The friendship she had with Balch became a motivation for activity. When they wrote to each other in their official capacities as secretaries of their respective sections, they discussed more than just business. They asked each other advice on decisions, gave lengthy descriptions of stories they thought would interest the other, and spoke with affection on receiving news of the other.<sup>82</sup> They did not meet again, but their friendship through correspondence remained strong and supportive.

It was to Balch that Moore mused about her disappointment at Australians not understanding their place in the world or realising the country's role in the wider international arena. Apathy towards international affairs by Australians was widely acknowledged.<sup>83</sup> Moore clearly saw how beneficial travelling was to her understanding of internationalism, and felt that the rest of Australia would benefit from the knowledge she gained.

Coming back to this, and picking up again our old familiar newspapers, I feel at once our isolation and remoteness from the main currents of the world's affairs. Similar causes are producing similar effects, in a modified way, but there is very little sense of the vital importance to people abroad of what is done even in this

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79 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 61.

80 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 62.

81 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 63.

82 Moore to Balch, 25 February 1920, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

83 Saunders, 'Are Women More Peaceful than Men?', 58.

‘corner’. I am going to try and do what in me lies to stir not only the sense of world responsibility, but to open the eyes of Australians to their opportunities to give a lead, at least in some directions.<sup>84</sup>

Moore, Goldstein and John crossed paths again briefly in London after their harmonious interactions at the congress. Goldstein and John also found it difficult to return to Australia straight away due to shipping shortages. John had secured some of her travel funding from the People’s Conservatorium of Melbourne, and so used her time to explore musical ideas in Paris, London and America.<sup>85</sup> She was the first of the three to return to Australia in October 1919, and once back she set her energies to using ‘the common tongue of music [to] ... bring together the common bond of peoples of the earth’.<sup>86</sup> She also became heavily involved in the Save the Children movement, inaugurating a local fund.<sup>87</sup>

Goldstein did not return to Australia for a long time. The Peace Delegation Fund of the Peace Army was unable to raise enough money for her return fare and she requested that no more money should be sent to her as she was severing her connection with the Women’s Political Association (WPA).<sup>88</sup> Travelling around Europe after the conference allowed her to experience the impact of war on society, not just on women, but also the failure of governments to meet the needs of injured and returned soldiers in finding employment. She became profoundly disillusioned with the peace plans and the lack of influence the women’s movement was able to have on them. Goldstein recalled that her decision to remain in England, rather than return to Australia, was partly because she felt she could ‘no longer work in the political field because the people did not seem willing to tread this path’.<sup>89</sup> Goldstein had converted to Christian Science by the late 1890s, a religious movement that strongly disagreed with medical intervention and believed illness could be overcome with prayer.<sup>90</sup> At the Zurich congress Goldstein was a vocal opponent to a proposal that the congress support the creation of an International Health Bureau. She wrote:

84 Saunders, ‘Are Women More Peaceful than Men?’, 58.

85 ‘Miss John’, *Woman Voter*, 6 November 1919, 3.

86 ‘Miss John’, *Woman Voter*, 6 November 1919, 3.

87 Moore to Balch, ‘My Dear Miss Balch’, 25 February 1920, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

88 ‘International Women’s Peace Congress’, *Woman Voter*, 18 December 1919, 1.

89 Goldstein quoted in Janette M Bomford, *That Dangerous and Persuasive Woman: Vida Goldstein* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1993), 199.

90 Goldstein along with her mother and sisters severed their religious connection with the Australian Church. Henderson, *The Goldstein Story*, 72.

[S]ome people ... may think I am rather obsessed about this ... but to allow a medical bureaucracy to be established for the ostensible purpose of protecting the health of the people is to forge a weapon which will be used against the coming democracy in every country.<sup>91</sup>

The disillusionment she felt with the political process combined with the growing influence of her Christian Science beliefs led her to 'come to the conclusion that the world's ills could not be cured by political means, but only through religion'. She then became a Christian Science practitioner.<sup>92</sup>

Without Goldstein's oversight, and with public sentiment moving on from the crisis of the war, the Peace Army and the WPA decided to disband.<sup>93</sup> As the only woman-specific peace group left, the Sisterhood of International Peace became the natural inheritor of the WILPF functions and moved to adopt the title of 'Victorian Branch of the Australian Section of WILPF'.<sup>94</sup> It kept the Sisterhood motto as a subtitle and called itself the 'Victorian Branch', to encourage peace groups in other states to complete the Australian section. There ended the sometimes turbulent rivalry between the two colourful groups in the Australian peace movement. The new society that was officially part of the structure of the international organisation wasted no time in beginning its operations.<sup>95</sup>

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The Zurich conference and the travels of the Australian women who participated represented a turning point for the women's peace organisation in Australia and reorganised the way Australian women participated in the international environment. Both the Sisterhood and the Peace Army waited until the end of the bitter, grinding and seemingly endless war to send their elected delegates to the conference, to help shape their contribution to world discussions for constructive peace. While only three women were able to attend, the experiences they reported back inspired and extended the understanding of internationalism as a political ideal for their followers and organisations. This congress also gave formal institutional support to the diverse groups in Australia.

91 Goldstein, quoted in *The Women's International Congress, Zurich 12–17 May 1919: Towards Peace and Freedom*, WILPF Publication, Sklar and Dublin, *Women and Social Movements*, 235.

92 Leslie M Henderson, 'Vida Goldstein 1869–1949 January 1966' [Manuscript], 1966, NLA.

93 'Miss Goldstein', *Woman Voter*, 18 December 1919, 4.

94 Sisterhood to Balch, 20 May 1920, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

95 WILPF Report, 1919–1921. Australian section—branches Melbourne, Hobart, Rockhampton. Melbourne, 15 March 1931, WILPF papers Box 1730/9, MS 9377, SLV.

Women peace activists understood that their conferences were 'unofficial'. Despite this, they organised them as best they could to approach the male-dominated arena with a 'strong and practical' platform to oppose national interests that did not prioritise peace.<sup>96</sup> They modelled their own 'unofficial' peace conference on the type of international institution they had hoped the League of Nations could be.

The travel experiences and hardships the women faced defined and challenged their political motivations. That they were unaccompanied women travelling with fluctuating itineraries highlighted their commitment, in a time when international travel was severely limited by the heightened sense of exclusionist nationalism in the aftermath of the conflict. The women's internationalism was deepened by their shared experiences and mutual collaborations in the flesh. The political ideal was always directed towards breaking down long-established views of war and militarism. The women developed lasting relationships that connected them across great divides, sharing personal stories and triumphs, providing mutual encouragement, and maintaining enthusiasm as 'kindred spirits'. They may not have had overwhelming support from the public at home, but they found solace in their shared beliefs across seas. This experience of internationalism motivated those individuals who were touched by it to commit even more of their time to the cause. Members often stayed involved in the organisation for significant lengths of their lives.

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96 Sisterhood to WPP, ICWPP, 5 June 1918, WILPF papers Box 1723/3, MS 9377, SLV.

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