

4

‘Our struggle is not only one for peace but also for freedom’

When the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) adopted its constitution at their international conference in Zurich in 1919, it also settled on a new name. In contrast with the existing placeholder name of ‘International Congress of Women for Permanent Peace’, many felt that the new name was ‘more inclusive, and looking more toward the future than that first proposed’.¹ Some disagreed, saying that they wished to retain the old name because of its focus on ‘permanent’ peace. In this exchange, the importance of both elements of the name became clear, and was highlighted when a delegate argued that ‘women cannot work for peace unless they are freed’.² The motion was put to a vote and WILPF was adopted, confirming that the organisation was bound to work for peace *and* freedom. At the time of the naming, peace and freedom seemed naturally aligned and complementary. By stating that women needed freedom to work for peace they were focusing not on national freedom, but on freedom from gendered oppression, which limited their capacity to act autonomously and participate as full global citizens. By World War II, however, the tension between peace and freedom took on a new meaning in the fight against fascist ideology and totalitarian oppression. Peace or freedom then became

1 ‘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*, 146.

2 ‘The Women’s International Congress, Zurich 12–17 May 1919, Towards Peace and Freedom’, WILPF Publication, 146.

a choice, and WILPF's name seemed oddly symbolic of the deep divide the peace movement would be forced to consider in the face of the aggressions of the dictators.

* * *

WILPF domestically and internationally saw the period after World War I, marked by widespread antiwar sentiment, as the best time to advance their cause. They utilised and encouraged the symbolism of antimilitarism within society, and were even prompted by national governments. There appeared to be a moment between the wars where the agenda of the women's peace movement and government policy coincided, culminating in the 1932 World Disarmament Conference organised by the League of Nations, to which most national governments sent delegations. Internationally, WILPF's president Jane Addams was recognised with a Nobel Peace Prize in 1931, and domestically the Scullin Labor Government embraced WILPF's ideas for disarmament.³ WILPF put its efforts into encouraging public pressure and presented the disarmament conference with a record-breaking petition. The brief period when some of its major views about peace coincided with those of a significant body of mainstream public opinion allowed WILPF to connect with those large sections of the community horrified by the devastation of the recent war. The new League of Nations Union, which had formed around 1920 in various states and which many prominent politicians had joined, surged in membership. Their mission included promoting peace and the new international organisation.⁴ This moment of recognition and relaxed tension, as energising as it was for peace activists, was short lived and hope soon gave way to disillusionment after Labor lost power and it became increasingly likely that another world war was imminent.

Global disarmament proved difficult to implement and interwar frictions impeded the success of any proposals. Once again, the world descended into conflict and war. The precipitous rate at which the pacifist concern dissipated was alarming and took WILPF by surprise. WILPF Australia was decidedly absolute in its pacifism and struggled to negotiate the sudden change in opinion among the public and some of their members who began

3 Eleanor M Moore, *The Quest for Peace, As I Have Known It in Australia* (Melbourne, 1948), 105. Jane Addams generously donated the prize money to WILPF International, to further support the organisation.

4 Hilary Summy, 'From Hope ... to Hope: Story of the Australian League of Nations Union, Featuring the Victorian Branch, 1921–1945' (PhD thesis, University of Queensland, 2007), 48.

approving of military action against the rising threat of fascism. The response to World War II by WILPF was one that divided the organisation and pushed WILPF in Australia almost to breaking point. It was the closest the organisation came to collapse. The Australian section continued to support the principle of absolute pacifism while European countries under fascist rule were supportive of more forceful measures to secure, and increasingly to protect, a threatened freedom. World War II challenged its ideas about nonviolence and forced an interrogation of the meaning of its name: was peace or freedom more important, and was peace meaningful without freedom? Focusing on Australian WILPF's response to the international section on a decision to support a boycott of Japan, we can see not only the breakdown of international networks because of the war, but also a new self-conscious positioning of Australia as a regional leader. Emboldened by its recent engagement with the region through the Pan-Pacific conferences, WILPF Australia demanded acknowledgement from the international section of its right to decide on WILPF's policy in the Pacific.

The Kellogg–Briand Pact

Between the wars, the Australian Government's involvement in various League of Nations conferences represented the first time the nation engaged separately in international forums from the British Empire. In the words of one historian, 'Australia came of age in the League of Nations'.⁵ The significance of the League of Nations for self-governing dominions and smaller nations was clear to all involved, including WILPF, who recognised that it gave Australia greater prominence and the 'status of an independent great power as no great international action can be taken without them'.⁶ However, the two decades of Australia's involvement with the League of Nations was presided over by conservative governments. Labor only held office for a single term between 1929 and 1932 with James Scullin as prime minister. As a result, while the nation engaged on the world stage independently for the first time, Australian governments promoted

5 WJ Hudson, *Australia and the League of Nations* (Sydney: Sydney University Press in association with the Australian Institute of International Affairs, 1980), 3.

6 Sheepshanks to Septimus Harwood, Sydney, 2 July 1928, 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.

pragmatism over any other moral or ideological considerations and pursued national policy 'with whatever weapons came to hand and without much regard for theory, philosophy, morality or even consistency'.⁷

After the Paris Peace Conference, the world turned to contemplating the issue of disarmament with a series of conferences aimed at negotiating a solution to any future arms race. On 27 August 1928, the US Secretary of State Frank B Kellogg agreed to a pact recommended by the French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, which encouraged other countries to join in outlawing war. This was known as the Kellogg–Briand Pact, or the Pact of Paris, and Australia was one of the original signatories.⁸ The US section of WILPF played a role in lobbying for the adoption of the pact, with Jane Addams herself heading a delegation of women that met with US President Calvin Coolidge in 1927. They presented him with a petition of 30,000 signatures which was also sent to Briand for consideration.⁹ The pact asserted that warfare should be declared a violation of international law. The fact that so many countries signed the pact gave a real sense of hope to many that wanted to protect the world from future wars as devastating as World War I. Moore noted that 'the pacifist's dream seemed to be coming true'.¹⁰ The Australian Government at the time, a Nationalist–Country Party coalition led by Prime Minister Stanley Bruce, paid tribute to the historical significance of the treaty.¹¹

After 1919 it was widely accepted that a conflict on any similar scale should be avoided in the future. On this point, pacifists and conservatives agreed. For WILPF both domestically and internationally, the Kellogg–Briand Pact represented a starting point for their campaign against war and they hoped it would mark 'the beginning of a series of steps towards the substitution of law for war ... As military measures are no longer to be taken, disarmament must be begun at once and carried out thoroughly'.¹² While the message of the pact was one welcomed by the international community, its weakness lay in the impossibility of enforcement. Instead of outlawing war, it outlawed the declaration of war and had many ambiguous clauses that allowed for the

7 Hudson, *Australia and the League of Nations*, 4.

8 Nigel Young, 'Kellogg–Briand Pact', in *The Oxford International Encyclopaedia of Peace*, ed. Nigel Young, online version (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

9 Robert H Ferrell, *Peace in Their Time: The Origins of the Kellogg–Briand Pact* (Hamden, Conn: Archon Books, 1968), 119.

10 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 86.

11 Alexander McLachlan, 'Speech: Renunciation of War: Treaty', *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates (CPD)*, Senate, 20 February 1929, 360.

12 Mary Sheepshanks, 'The Kellogg Peace Pact and After', *Pax International* 3, no. 9 (August 1928).

justification of defensive wars.¹³ For this reason the pact led the worldwide disarmament movement to call for further measures that would practically implement what had now been in principle agreed upon.

WILPF Australia's activities in the aftermath of war

WILPF was concerned with Australia's continuing postwar hostility towards Germany. It advocated tolerance and understanding to prevent another war and thought the Versailles treaty unfairly targeted the country. In 1920 the Australian Peace Alliance sent a letter to the government, which was forwarded on to WILPF International, outlining how Australia remained the only country that refused to trade with Germany, a position that seemed unjustifiable on both moral and economic grounds.¹⁴ This prompted the international section of WILPF, concerned that 'relics of war hysteria' were clouding judgement, to single out Australia as having a particular problem in forgiving Germany. WILPF International noted:

We have heard that the majority of the Australian people still cherishes as great a hatred of the German people to-day as during the war. French, Belgian and German women find this hard to understand. We who, since 1919, have worked together as comrades to re-establish understanding between our nations, beg our Australian sisters from our hearts to try to create understanding in their country in place of hatred.¹⁵

Moore wrote to the editor of *The Sun*, a Sydney daily newspaper, requesting that they discontinue using the word 'Hun' to describe the German people.

Ethnologically, the term is incorrect; sentimentally, it is out-of-date; and as a sneer at a defeated and suffering people, it does no honour to the pen or voice that uses it.¹⁶

13 Young, 'Kellogg-Briand Pact'.

14 'Trade With Germany' letter sent to Australian Members of Parliament on behalf of the APA, date not specified—c 1920, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers. See also Moore, 30 November 1920, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

15 'To the Women of Australia', letter sent from WILPF International the Australian Section, 1923, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

16 Letter from Eleanor Moore to *The Sun* editor, 28 September 1923, Box 1724/1, Papers, WILPF, MS 9377, State Library of Victoria (SLV).



Mrs WJ Drummond speaking, 'No More War' Demonstration, 1923.

Source: Eleanor M. Moore papers, 1887–1953, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW PXE 1025. See Appendix for a short biography of Mabel Drummond.

The paper refused the request, replying that 'they are not suffering half as much as they deserve, or as I hope they will suffer in the future'.¹⁷ The hostilities of the war did not evaporate with the declaration of peace.

Despite this, WILPF continued to campaign for peace, and found a more receptive audience elsewhere. It coordinated a Peace Library that operated out of rooms at 376 Flinders Street in Melbourne. They maintained a full and vibrant schedule of speaking commitments and actively participated in the annual 'No More War' demonstrations on Armistice Day, often having speakers talk to large crowds at the Yarra Bank about international issues. With the help of other peace organisations coordinating efforts for the 'No More War' campaign, its promotion was widespread. Advertisements were displayed in picture theatres in Melbourne with lines such as: 'A mighty crusade against the whole war system is imperative. If we do not end war, war

17 Montague Grover *The Sun* editor, to Moore, 1 October 1923, Box 1724/1, Papers, WILPF, MS 9377, SLV; Sally O'Neill, 'Grover, Montague MacGregor (Monty) (1870–1943)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (ADB), National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/grover-montague-macgregor-monty-6500/text11147, published first in hardcopy 1983, accessed online 30 March 2022.

will end us'.¹⁸ Posters promoting peace were even placed in bus shelters with the costs donated by the Trades Hall Council (THC).¹⁹ WILPF entered into a phase of intense activity, seeing the coming of peace as the proper time not only to educate and campaign against war but also warn against future wars. Such campaigns were more problematic during a crisis when national fervour was at its peak. They continued with their yearly fete, held at Janie Kerr's residence, which would often raise valuable contributions to their running costs and helped to support the journal *Peacewards*.²⁰

The election of Labor governments after the war led to more serious engagement with the peace movement. In July 1924, turmoil in Victorian state politics, and a vote of no confidence in the Premier, brought Labor to power with Premier George Prendergast at the helm.²¹ As his ascension to the leadership was unexpected and few anticipated this government to have long-term prospects, Prendergast used the opportunity to implement Labor policy with symbolic importance.²² Conscription debates during the war had caused deep divisions within the Australian Labor Party (ALP), including in Victoria where the federal government was based. Prendergast had strongly opposed conscription during the war and had called for a negotiated peace settlement rather than following those determined on a 'punitive humiliation of Germany'.²³ When he became premier, the issue of postwar militarism was one that he felt very strongly about, though it also continued to divide the party and the community. Reversing the policy of previous governments, Prendergast refused to honour a £50,000 contribution to the building of a Shrine of Remembrance, declaring he would prefer to fund a 'lasting memorial' like a hospital that would 'continue to do good as long as there is need'.²⁴ His government also refused to gazette Anzac Day as a public holiday. He told a gathering at Trades Hall that duty to the Labor movement required being 'saturated with the ideals of peace'.²⁵

18 Sentences shown as advertisements on films at picture theatres, No More War Week, 1923, Melbourne Australia, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

19 Moore to Acting Secretary of WILPF International, 7 January 1924, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

20 *Advocate*, Thursday 7 December 1922, 13.

21 Geoffrey Serle, 'Prendergast, George Michael (1854–1937)', ADB, National Centre of Biography, ANU, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/prendergast-george-michael-8103/text14145, published first in hardcopy 1988, accessed online 25 July 2016.

22 Paul Strangio and Brian J Costar, eds, *The Victorian Premiers 1856–2006* (Annandale: Federation Press, 2006), 178.

23 Strangio and Costar, *The Victorian Premiers*, 177.

24 Bruce Scates, *A Place to Remember: A History of the Shrine of Remembrance* (Port Melbourne, Vic: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 45.

25 Scates, *A Place to Remember*, 45.



WILPF fete at 'Trenant', home of Mrs Warren Kerr (President), Kew, December 1923.

Source: Eleanor M. Moore papers, 1887–1953, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW PXE 1025.

Though its term in office was brief, Prendergast's government was emblematic of the extent to which support for peace activities was brought into the mainstream after the war. The war-weary public, dealing with personal trauma after the war, was more accepting of internationalist sentiments, especially after the creation of the League of Nations. The Victorian ALP adopted into its constitution at the 1919 annual conference 'that peace and internationalism be inculcated in the minds of all children attending State schools'.²⁶ Historian Bruce Scates has noted that there was a spirit of 'militant internationalism' in the postwar years which divided the society 'along much the same lines as the conscription referenda of 1916–17'.²⁷ Conservatives still deplored the goals of the 'anaemic pacifists', yet there was a higher tolerance for 'subversive' perspectives during peacetime. Without the pressure of wartime scrutiny, WILPF was emboldened to contribute more actively to the public discussion. Eleanor Moore expressed her support

26 Australian Labor Party Platform and Constitution, Labor Call Print, 1919, papers of R. S. Ross, MS 3222, Box 1 File 27, NLA.

27 Scates, *A Place to Remember*, 45.

for Prendergast's agenda when writing to the international office of WILPF, describing an event where she was given 'the honour' of sharing the stage with Prendergast to represent WILPF at a speech evening. The supportive atmosphere for her pacifist sentiment shone through when she wrote of how 'one of the members of the Federal Parliament who was present asked afterwards for a copy of what I had said, that he might quote it in the House of Representatives.'²⁸

In this climate, WILPF considered the best course was to influence the rising generation through schools, eventually deciding to establish an International Peace Scholarship in Victorian state schools to encourage students to think about peace and internationalism.²⁹ Open to all children under 14, the scholarship was administered with the authorisation of the Victorian Department of Education and had the subeditor of *The School Paper*, Gilbert Wallace, providing advice on formalities.³⁰ Students were asked to submit essays on topics chosen by WILPF and the Director of Education awarded the scholarship with both parties sharing the costs of the scholarship. WILPF provided the prize winnings of £4 for school requisites while the minister granted free tuition for four years at a district high school, a school of domestic arts or a technical school.³¹ This cost the organisation £16 per year, which was raised through contributions from members and by hosting sewing meetings to make items for their annual fete where they sold them for a small profit. The purpose of the scholarship was to be a 'practical attempt to draw the attention of Australia's future citizens' to questions about the abolition of war, arbitration, and the promotion of goodwill and friendship. Education was the primary means through which WILPF believed they could achieve this end.

28 Moore to Glucklich WILPF Secretary Geneva, 1 October 1924, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

29 'International Peace Scholarship', *Education Gazette and Teachers Aid*, 16 September 1924, accessed SLV, 284. See also 'International Peace Scholarship' poster September 1924, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers. 'Peace Scholarship', *The Argus*, 4 August 1925.

30 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 76; LJ Blake, *Vision and Realisation: A Centenary History of State Education in Victoria* (Melbourne: Education Dept of Victoria, 1973), 1057.

31 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 76. 'International Peace Scholarship', *Education Gazette and Teachers Aid*, 16 September 1924, 284.



July Demonstration in Hyde Park, 1922.

Source: Eleanor M. Moore papers, 1887–1953, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW PXE 1025.

The International Peace Scholarship was created around the same time the Trades Hall Council decided to provide funds for prizes to the Education Department. The prizes, awarded on Armistice Day, were to be distributed to Victorian primary school students who wrote essays on international peace. Both WILPF and the THC wrote to the Minister for Public Instruction, John Lemmon, asking that the government accept the proposals and agree to their administration. Forwarding both requests with approval to the director of the department, Lemmon requested that the paper reflect more peace-focused material to support students in their essays:

I desire that prior to the competition appropriate articles may be published in the School Paper. It is the desire that the children may have an opportunity of obtaining material from which they may select ideas and thoughts that may be incorporated in their essays. The articles should seek to lead the minds of the children from ideas which may foster the war spirit and glorification of battles of conquest. They should inculcate high ideals of international peace and good will, and the brotherhood of man.³²

32 Mr Lemmon, Victoria, *Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 28 CA vol. 167 July–October 1924, 9 September 1924, 313.

The directive drew the attention of the press and *The School Paper* was in the spotlight. The *Age* ran a story titled 'Labor and Peace, No War Teaching in Schools, Decision of Minister' which quoted a resolution from the Labor policy platform they assumed underpinned the directive of Lemmon to the department:

That no articles regarding or extolling wars, battles or heroes of past war be printed in the State school papers or books, and that peace and international brotherhood be inculcated in the minds of all children attending state schools.³³

Letters to the editor flooded in to the daily press from concerned citizens worried that Lemmon was tampering with the school paper and trying to 'prevent the rising generation of Australians from learning of the glorious deeds and self-sacrifice of their fathers'.³⁴ 'The Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Imperial League cried censorship and felt that 'the feelings of the members of the League [had] been severely tried by the statements of many Ministers'.³⁵ Attempts at clarification were reported as creating more confusion, with officers from the department telling the press: 'in the absence of a definite Ministerial ruling, they did not know how far-reaching Mr Lemmon's order was intended to be'.³⁶ Peace groups sent in letters of support for Lemmon's approach, while other members of the community attacked it. The Presbyterian church wrote that 'the proposal is absurd. The Christian Church does not desire to glorify war, but war is a fact that has left its mark upon history'.³⁷ Professor Ernest Scott, chair of history at Melbourne University, weighed in to the debate with a long article in the *Melbourne Herald*, which was republished in other states, arguing that 'to eliminate war as a factor in national development—and, indeed, as a very substantial factor in national progress—would be to falsify history deliberately'.³⁸

Lemmon clarified his position to the parliament maintaining he was misrepresented in the furore. A letter from Mabel Drummond on behalf of WILPF was tabled alongside the THC proposal as evidence of why he

33 'Labor and Peace, No War Teaching in Schools, Decision of Minister', *The Age*, 23 August 1924, 15.

34 'Tampering with School Paper, to the Editor of the Argus', *The Argus*, 27 August 1924, 21.

35 'Soldiers and the Ministry', *Portland Guardian*, 4 September 1924, 2.

36 'School Books—Labor Bans Wars', *The Weekly Times*, 30 August 1924, 15.

37 'School Books—Labor Bans Wars', *The Weekly Times*, 30 August 1924, 15. 'Peace Alliance Pleased', *The Argus*, 3 September 1924, 18.

38 Professor Ernest Scott, 'Labour Ukases—History, Without War!—The Lemmon-Brennan Policy', *The Telegraph*, reprinted from the *Melbourne Herald*, 9 September 1924, 6.

gave the directive to *The School Paper*.³⁹ Heated debate ensued with Labor members being likened to ‘cold-footer[s] who stayed home, sheltering behind a woman.’⁴⁰ The comment is a classic example of the disparaging way women were sometimes characterised when entering into political debate. Unwittingly, the initiatives by WILPF and the THC caused intense public debate over the teaching of history in public schools and the role it played in advancing different political agendas. Lemmon reassured the chamber that no material alterations were made to *The School Paper*, but that he would encourage the principles of peace wherever he could.⁴¹

The Prendergast Government soon lost the support of the precarious coalition that sustained them. By November 1924, after disagreement over a budget that conservatives called ‘class warfare’ for its proposed tax increases for the rich, another motion of no confidence was passed and Labor lost power.⁴² Their term was short but intense, reprising divisions over militarism that had continued to simmer in Australian society after World War I. WILPF’s Peace Scholarship, created during this intensive period, benefited from the high-profile public debate. It continued for a decade with enough interest and entries to award the prize annually. It lapsed in 1934 when WILPF felt there were no longer enough teachers encouraging their students to compete and the number of entrants became too small.⁴³

The disarmament movement

During the 1920s, arising from the view that arms manufacture itself had been a significant driver of the recent war, WILPF was surveying the problem of international trade in armaments. A report released by the Swedish section in 1928 analysed the defence budgets, and import and export trends

39 Lemmon, quoting letters from Mabel Drummond, WILPF and EJ Holloway of the Trades Hall Council, Victoria, *Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 28 CA vol. 167 July–October 1924, 9 September 1924, 313.

40 Victoria, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 167 9 September 1924, 332, quoted in Phillip Deery and Frank Bongiorno, ‘Labor, Loyalty and Peace: Two Anzac Controversies of the 1920s’, in *Labour History*, no. 106, (May 2014): 216.

41 Lemmon, quoting letters from Mabel Drummond, WILPF and EJ Holloway of the Trades Hall Council, Victoria, *Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 28 CA vol. 167 July–October 1924, 9 September 1924, 313.

42 Strangio and Costar, *The Victorian Premiers*, 178.

43 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 76.

around the world.⁴⁴ The findings reinforced to WILPF that disarmament and economic issues were intertwined, and in promoting disarmament they would have to develop a coherent response to the economic consequences of their demands. They also realised that the main opposition to disarmament would be from people with 'vested economic interests'.⁴⁵ In their campaign policy platform they noted that national governments should 'exclude all persons having an interest in the maintenance of armaments' from any conference discussing the issue.⁴⁶

Every active interwar peace group included disarmament in its program. It 'became a definite political plan and as such it fired the imagination of the civilized world'.⁴⁷ Domestically, League of Nations Union began operation from 1920 with high-profile members, including public servants and politicians, which helped to promote the anti-war agenda as a mainstream issue.⁴⁸ Other women's organisations that had shied away from a definite stance during the war returned to support the League of Nations and discussions on disarmament.⁴⁹ As a campaign with clear objectives commanding wide support, it was fitted to a collaborative approach. Internationally WILPF became part of a Liaison Committee of International Women's Organisations to facilitate the joint campaign for disarmament, which brought together the International Alliance of Women (IAW), International Council of Women (ICW) and International Federation of University Women, among others.⁵⁰ This joint committee sent deputations to the Eleventh Assembly of the League of Nations. By January 1931 the League of Nations announced its intention to convene the World Disarmament Conference to be held in February 1932. With only a year to prepare, the women's movement began organising what would become the world's biggest petition to be presented to political leaders at the conference.

44 GC Bussey and Margaret Tims, *Pioneers for Peace: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1915-1965*, 2nd ed. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1965), 93.

45 Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*, 93.

46 Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*, 97.

47 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 85.

48 Summy, 'From Hope ... to Hope', 47.

49 For example, the NCW began to support peace work through the League of Nations, by allowing the League of Nations Union to join the council. Judith Smart and Marian Quartly, *Respectable Radicals: A History of the National Council of Women of Australia 1896-2006* (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2015), 119.

50 Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*, 95. See also Leila J Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 41, doi.org/10.1515/9780691221816.

In Australia the peace movement also came together in solidarity over disarmament. The World Disarmament Movement formed in 1928 as an umbrella organising group for more than 88 groups ranging from peace societies to church and labour groups. The first president was Henry Bournes Higgins, the judge best known for delivering the Harvester decision in 1907 and bereft at losing his only son in the war, who presided until his death in 1929.⁵¹ The growing movement recognised that simply campaigning for the Australian Government to disarm would have ‘very little bearing on the general question of world peace’.⁵² They wanted to find a way to bind larger nations to a popular sentiment. Increasingly familiar with the dismissive approach adopted by national governments, they wanted to override the priorities of the conservative political leaders.

The Australian section of WILPF began drafting a proposal that they believed would bypass governments’ hostility towards genuine engagement in diplomatic conferences. Along with the Australian Peace Alliance (APA), WILPF prepared a recommendation for world ‘simultaneous referenda’.⁵³ They sent the proposal to over one thousand organisations and national governments. The reply from the international headquarters of WILPF showed interest and asked for Australia’s experience with the process to see what it would be like if other countries were to follow.⁵⁴ The proposal for an international referendum drew directly on Australia’s recent experience with the 1916 and 1917 plebiscites on conscription as well as on the referendum provisions in the nation’s constitution. In her letter in reply, Moore noted how the referendum allowed Australia to avoid being bound by British foreign policy, and how the creation of the League of Nations gave Australia its own voice in international affairs. Yet she also recognised the long path to independence that still lay ahead, noting how the ‘sentimental bias’ was very strong, leading the wider public to believe that ‘the average Australian thinks of all foreign policy as a matter with which he has no concern—that is England’s business’.⁵⁵ It was thought that all nations conducting simultaneous referenda would be a way for people’s opinion to be heard beyond the complexity of geopolitical realities. In the end the prospect of organising for all nations to participate in an international referendum

51 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 87.

52 Moore to Glucklich, 5 January 1923, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

53 Moore on behalf of the APA to Balch WILPF International, 10 July 1922, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

54 Glucklich to Moore, 25 September 1922, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

55 Moore on behalf of the APA to Glucklich, WILPF Geneva, 5 January 1923, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

seemed unfeasible and the joint committee of women's organisations decided instead on a petition. Beginning in 1931, and organised out of the WILPF office in Geneva, the disarmament petition reached across the world.⁵⁶

While the commitment to Britain and empire remained strong in the Australian community at this time, WILPF's view that Australia should have an independent foreign policy was quite distinctive. They believed that average Australians lacking interest and information about the state of world affairs and relying on England to make decisions was 'a state of affairs that must pass'.⁵⁷ It also consciously linked Australia's dependence on empire with war by calling conflicts that Australia could be drawn into 'British wars' and noting that 'it is the Great Powers that make war'.⁵⁸ In 1925 Moore went further to say that 'this country has never engaged in war as a result of its own policy, nor has it ever been attacked. But three times in little more than a century of national life we have been pulled into war by our position as a dependency of Great Britain, and of course that is our great danger again'.⁵⁹ For the peace movement, empire and imperialism demanded an unquestioning commitment to wars that were not their own and threatened the nation's ability to make sovereign decisions about its involvement in armed conflict.

This tension was self-consciously recognised by the Australian section, especially as many other sections and nations did not understand the complex status of Australia as both a nation and a dominion. On many occasions WILPF women had to write and explain Australia's national policy to their international colleagues and make clear when the country could act independently and when it could not. WILPF therefore took the activities of Australian delegates to the League of Nations very seriously, as they knew in that forum Australia could act independently, but when it came to discussing the lobbying of governments about resisting war they had to acknowledge the limitations of a country that lacked a foreign service. Moore felt it was 'not easy' to formulate a 'next step to peace' because the government action was 'determined by instructions from England which we have no means of influencing'.⁶⁰

56 Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*, 95.

57 Moore on behalf of the APA to Glucklich, WILPF Geneva, 5 January 1923, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

58 Moore on behalf of the APA to Glucklich, WILPF Geneva, 5 January 1923, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

59 Moore to Doty, 8 December 1925, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

60 Moore to Doty, 8 December 1925, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

The petition and official government support



Committee groups of WILPF with the disarmament petition, ready to go to Geneva, 1931.

Source: Herald Feature Service, photographer. Records of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, MS 9377 State Library of Victoria.

Australian women began preparations for the petition straight away, using a modified version of the British section's form to collect signatures. They not only utilised the networks of the peace movement but those of church groups, other women's societies, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the Australian Natives' Association, the League of Nations Union and more.⁶¹ WILPF did not have any travel funding for the canvassing of signatures and a request to the government for a railway pass was refused. But they had the devotion of individuals who disseminated the information and gathered support. Miss Kathleen Singleton was sent by the Melbourne Branch to Ballarat to doorknock for support and Amy Wilkins, the president of the small Newcastle branch, addressed meetings and canvassed regional areas, while Mrs Young visited Sydney to campaign along with Miss Ruth Swann. Two more sympathisers, Mrs Brice and Miss Casely, were responsible for the petition in Queensland. The League of Nations Union and the Women's Non-Party Association canvassed South Australia.

⁶¹ Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 90.

Tasmania felt the impact of the local and active WILPF membership.⁶² In Western Australia, collaboration with the Women's Service Guild (WSG) yielded a significant proportion of signatures, though there was disagreement about adequate recognition for the WSG by WILPF.⁶³ The area of Australia covered showed that while the membership and branch structure remained small, their canvassing and collaboration had a wide reach. The Melbourne group of WILPF acted as the distribution point for Australia. After months of 'door to door, shop to shop, explaining and arguing, writing to friends far and near' where representatives gathered signatures at public meetings, in street stands and at town fetes, the reward for their effort materialised in the final number.⁶⁴ Australia ended up with 117,740 signatures, all checked and certified then packaged up ready to be sent to WILPF in Geneva.⁶⁵ They joined the worldwide collection, built up by over 40 countries contributing over 8 million names.⁶⁶ The array of significant signatories to the Australian petition reveals how much the political sphere had changed over the short period from 1915 to 1931. Prime Minister James Scullin did more than just sign the pledge; he was present at the sending of the parcels and looked for ways to translate the ambition into national policy.

Labor had come to power late in 1929. They were led by Scullin and replaced a Nationalist–Country coalition government that had been led by Stanley Melbourne Bruce.⁶⁷ Very soon after Scullin's election the New York stock market crashed and the world was pulled into a severe economic depression that would later become known as the Great Depression. The new government was immediately faced with very serious economic problems. Scullin had won the election on industrial relations but found unemployment dangerously high. With a need to cut expenditure, he implemented deep cuts to defence spending.⁶⁸ These cuts were ideologically driven, as Scullin had been an avowed anti-militarist throughout his political career, opposing conscription, speaking out against the harsh treatment of Germany in the

62 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 89.

63 WSG Executive meeting in July 1932 quoted in Dianne Davidson, *Women on the Warpath: Feminists of the First Wave* (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1997), 127.

64 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 90.

65 Moore to Secretary WILPF, 20 January 1932, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

66 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 89.

67 JR Robertson, 'Scullin, James Henry (1876–1953)', ADB, National Centre of Biography, ANU, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/scullin-james-henry-8375/text14699, published in hardcopy 1988, accessed online 13 June 2014.

68 John Robertson, *J.H. Scullin: A Political Biography* (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1974), 215.

Peace Treaty and recognising the importance of internationalism.⁶⁹ This was a departure from the priorities of previous Australian governments, who treated the League of Nations with suspicion. Scullin had a more optimistic attitude, believing it could settle 'international disputes within the forum of the League of Nations instead of on the battlefield.'⁷⁰

The rhetoric of war changed within Australia in the 1920s and 1930s. Official and government sources were no longer in tension with the pacifist movement, but rather in chorus. Even the postmaster general, the future Prime Minister Joseph Lyons, approved pacifist propaganda displaying the World Peace Pact to be hung in money order offices in 1930.⁷¹ For Scullin, internationalism was central to his governing philosophy and the League of Nations was an important forum to attain disarmament and peace. He sent ministers to all international conferences. James Fenton, the Minister for Trade and Customs, attended the five powers naval conference in London, January 1930, where he received a delegation of the British Women's Peace Crusade that included WILPF women.⁷² Scullin also travelled and represented Australia at the eleventh session of the League in 1930 while also attending the Imperial Conference in London. The decision unsettled his cabinet as many domestic issues needed attention and the parliament had to be recalled by Acting Prime Minister Fenton in Scullin's absence.⁷³ Australian WILPF women were proud of their peace-loving leaders, and expressed their approval in letters sent to introduce the international section of WILPF to the Australian League of Nations delegates. Moore's letter reveals how the Australian women could give a local perspective of the politicians:

All three are peace people. Mr [Francis] Brennan [Attorney General, and leading Catholic ALP member] especially was a pacifist even during the war, and in those days, when the present political eminence was hardly thought of, we were together on many a platform pleading this unpopular cause. Mrs Scullin and Mrs Brennan are both going with their husbands, and we have written to them asking them if possible to visit the Maison Internationale.

69 Robertson, *J.H. Scullin*, 59.

70 James Scullin, *CPD*, House of Representatives, 20 March 1930, vol. 123, 325 quoted in Robertson, *J.H. Scullin*, 216.

71 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 88.

72 Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*, 91. JR Robertson, 'Fenton, James Edward (1864–1950)', ADB, National Centre of Biography, ANU, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/fenton-james-edward-6155/text10571, published in hardcopy 1981, accessed online 11 June 2014.

73 Hudson, *Australia and the League of Nations*, 195.

I know you always make a special point of approaching the League of Nations delegates, and with these particular ones we think it would be specially worth while.⁷⁴

For the women of WILPF in Melbourne a moment of recognition for their work and an endorsement that reinforced the legitimacy of their cause was exemplified in a town hall meeting attended by notable political figures. It was convened by the League of Nations Union and the World Disarmament Movement and held in the Town Hall on 30 November 1931.⁷⁵ The Lord Mayor of Melbourne opened proceedings before a procession of WILPF women presented the petition to the prime minister. The petition was endorsed by Scullin and had many other notable signatories, including that of Sir John Monash, Commander of the Australian Corps on the Western Front in World War I. On the stage were a variety of public leaders including the federal Opposition Leader Joseph Lyons, Attorney-General Frank Brennan, and the Chancellor of the University of Melbourne John Macfarland. Together they represented the highest level of state and federal politics and public office and they all stood in support of disarmament.⁷⁶ It was a moment of reflection for Moore who went on to write about the event in many WILPF publications. She understood the significance of having such institutional support and that it might not be seen again: 'it was the greatest public gesture for peace and disarmament ever yet officially made in Australia.'⁷⁷

This meeting was held very close to the federal election, which took place on 19 December 1931. Scullin thought 'it might seem strange to some that they were gathered together for a disarmament conference, or a peace demonstration on the eve of a general election', but he reiterated its importance to his policy platform. The need to promote ideas of peace and internationalism even close to an election 'showed that the question before them transcended all other interests.'⁷⁸

74 Moore to Sheepshanks, Geneva WILPF, 12 July 1930, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

75 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 91.

76 'Disarmament Demonstration', *The Argus*, 24 November, 1931; 'Disarmament. A Melbourne Meeting, November 30', *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 1 December 1931, 4. Summy, 'From Hope ... to Hope', 96.

77 Moore, 'Early days of the WILPF' compiled by CMR Crosland, issued by the Perth branch of WILPF, 1943, Box 1732/4-6, Papers, WILPF, MS 9377, SLV.

78 'Disarmament Meeting in Melbourne', *The Mercury*, 1 December 1931, 8.

The World Disarmament Conference 1932

The Scullin Government was not a stable one and after many tumultuous events, including the resignation of two cabinet ministers Lyons and Fenton, it lost government at the December 1931 elections. This put the newly formed United Australia Party in government. It was led by Lyons who, while generally supportive of disarmament and peace, was not as ideologically driven by these demands as Scullin. It was the Lyons Government that was responsible for sending a delegate to the much-feted World Disarmament Conference in February 1932, and it chose John Latham, who had represented Australia at the League of Nations General Assembly in 1926.⁷⁹ After the defeat of the Scullin Labor Government, WILPF was beginning to sense the cooperation and support they enjoyed for a brief period was ending, though they knew of the new government's previous commitment to disarmament and intended to pressure it to stay the course. When writing to the international section, they were realistic about the prospect of Latham as a representative, calling him 'exceedingly cautious'.⁸⁰ They expressed disappointment that the government could not be persuaded to send a woman to the conference, the excuse being 'they say they cannot afford to do so'.⁸¹ Women were routinely excluded from the white men's club of international affairs.

The Lyons Government had only gained power a few weeks before the opening of the conference and as a result the Australian delegation was relatively unprepared. They were often inclined to follow the direction of Britain rather than make an independent Australian stand. The WILPF women were correct in their hesitation about Latham, who did not show much interest in preparing for the conference. According to historian WJ Hudson, Latham was more interested in using the time abroad in London discussing rearmament than being in Geneva to discuss disarmament.⁸² The conference opened on 2 February, but Latham did not arrive until 27 April, having spent time from 9 April in London. Even then he only spent one week at the conference, travelling back to London for another month and returning to Geneva for one more week in mid-June, bringing his time engaged with the proceedings at only two weeks out of a possible 23.⁸³

79 Stuart Macintyre, 'Latham, Sir John Greig (1877–1964)', ADB, National Centre of Biography, ANU, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/latham-sir-john-greig-7104/text12251, published in hardcopy 1986, accessed online 17 June 2014.

80 Moore to Drevet, WILPF, 15 March 1932, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

81 Moore to Drevet, WILPF, 15 March 1932, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

82 Hudson, *Australia and the League of Nations*, 102.

83 Hudson, *Australia and the League of Nations*, 109.

Scullin, now in opposition, asked in question time about Latham travelling away from the conference despite work at the conference being incomplete. He pressed Lyons: 'will he attend the further sittings of the Disarmament Conference?' to which Lyons answered, 'I hope so'.⁸⁴

Fifty-nine delegations were represented at the conference, including the USA, the Soviet Union, China and Japan.⁸⁵ This impressive gathering of nations gave the disarmament movement great hope that serious negotiation would take place to reduce or abolish armaments. On Saturday 6 February, in the opening week of the conference, the joint Women's Disarmament Committee presented the WILPF petition to a specially convened extraordinary plenary meeting where it was read out country by country to show how widespread the petition was.⁸⁶ Many regarded it as the 'biggest international petition there has ever been; nothing approaching it in scale was ever tried, before or since'.⁸⁷ The presentation of the petition, and the recognition by the delegates to the conference that it represented a worldwide campaign that had been in motion for years, gave legitimacy and urgency to the proceedings. WILPF noted how it affected the delegates, many using it as an example of how much the combined people of the world desired peace and security and how important their roles at the conference subsequently were:

The presentation of the petitions seems to have really made an impression on public opinion and on the delegates. Many of the delegates in their subsequent speeches spoke of the petitions ... and the delegates seem to feel the necessity of emphasising that they speak in the name of the peoples.⁸⁸

The conference chairperson, Arthur Henderson of the British Labour Party, referenced this sentiment in his opening address: 'the world wants disarmament ... The conference itself is unique. Assembled here are the spokesmen of seventeen hundred million people ... I refuse to contemplate even the possibility of failure'.⁸⁹ This atmosphere of hope characterised the

⁸⁴ Scullin to Lyons, *CPD*, House of Representatives, 20 May 1932, 1123.

⁸⁵ Hudson, *Australia and the League of Nations*, 107.

⁸⁶ Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 92. See also: Verbatim record of the extraordinary plenary meeting, Saturday 6 February 1932, 'Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments Series', United Nations Archives Geneva, 187.

⁸⁷ Philip Noel-Baker, *The First World Disarmament Conference, 1932-1933 and Why It Failed* (Oxford; New York: Pergamon Press, 1979), 68.

⁸⁸ Anne Zueblin, to Moore, 12 March, 1932, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

⁸⁹ Arthur Henderson, 'First Plenary Meeting Text of the Debates', Tuesday 2 February 1932, 'Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments Series: A Verbatim Records of Plenary meetings Volume 1, 2 February to 23 July 1932', United Nations Archives Geneva, 40.

beginning of the conference, but as the months went by, it was clear that the conference was going to be a disappointment. By July 1932 Germany had withdrawn from the negotiations. There was also disagreement among governments about the desired outcomes of the conference, which extended over years, seeing many electoral changes in national delegations that led to inconsistencies. Many acknowledged that the conference was convened too late to make a difference as Japanese and Italian attacks and annexations had already occurred in Manchuria and Abyssinia.⁹⁰ The delegates at the conference also began to register their dissatisfaction at the involvement of 'vested interests' or 'hawks' who were more interested in secret diplomacy and armament profits than a serious engagement with world disarmament.⁹¹ This all contributed to the petering out of proceedings, as the conference was never officially terminated. It continued into mid-1934, when the chair, Henderson, reserved the authority to reconvene, but his death in 1935 meant there was no further meeting.

Aftermath of the conference, the rise of 'collective security', and the IPC

The peace movement worldwide was devastated by the failure of the disarmament conference. Moore noted how 'public interest and hope ebbed together', showing that without the profile and promise of success, it became harder to push for a peaceful solutions to world problems.⁹² The peace movement could not believe that public interest could be so great, yet come to nothing so quickly. Scullin expressed his disbelief in the House of Representatives saying how disappointing the disarmament conference was:

I have been disappointed with the results of the Disarmament Conference which has been sitting for two and a half years. When I was Prime Minister, I stood on the public platform in the biggest halls in Australia, in company with representatives of the then Opposition, and voiced Australia's views on the subject of disarmament.⁹³

90 Hudson, *Australia and the League of Nations*, 110.

91 Noel-Baker, *The First World Disarmament Conference*, 11.

92 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 95.

93 James Scullin, 'Speech; Armaments and Munitions Renunciation of War', *CPD*, House of Representatives, 5 December 1934, 799.

Despite the conference's failure, WILPF was determined to capitalise on the work members had put into the petition and the wider disarmament effort. They began a 'People's Mandate to Governments' campaign in 1935 which involved having organisations representative of the wider population sign a pledge in favour of disarmament, including 'labour bodies, women's organisations, peace and anti-war societies, educational organisations, political clubs, reform and religious movements, literary, professional and business associations, and youth associations'.⁹⁴ The wording of the pledge was urgent, noting: 'to meet the present threat of world chaos we, the undersigned, having faith in the power of human intelligence, demand that our Governments in common action fulfil their international pledges.'⁹⁵ In Australia 104 organisations signed the mandate, which WILPF estimated represented around 100,000 people. This was sent to the British section of WILPF, who presented it in a 'Golden Book' in a delegation to the president of the League of Nations Assembly in 1936. The Australian Amy Wilkins from the Newcastle branch of WILPF joined the ceremony.⁹⁶ Once again, however, WILPF had to recognise that its efforts were unavailing, with Moore reporting that the mandate had 'no traceable effect upon practical policy anywhere'.⁹⁷

At this time another campaign was gaining momentum. The International Peace Campaign (IPC) aimed to restore authority in the League of Nations. Led by Lord Robert Cecil, it galvanised support around the desire to prevent another war, and it signified a subtle but important shift in the demands of the peace movement.⁹⁸ The shift challenged WILPF to define its stance on absolute pacifism.⁹⁹ This became clear when the IPC released its 'four points', one of which centred on the new theory of 'collective security'. According to Moore, 'collective security' became fashionable after the dream of complete disarmament failed. She wrote:

94 'People's Mandate to Governments', Box 1727/2, Papers, WILPF, MS 9377, SLV. 'Peoples' Mandate to Governments', *Pax International* 10, no. 5 (July 1935).

95 'Peoples' Mandate to Governments', *Pax International* 10, no. 5 (July 1935).

96 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 111.

97 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 111.

98 Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*, 148. See also RJ Overly, *The Morbid Age: Britain Between the Wars* (London: Allen Lane, 2009).

99 Malcolm Saunders and Ralph Summy, 'Odd Ones Out: The Australian Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom: 1919–41', *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 40, no. 1 7 April 2008: 83, doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8497.1994.tb00093.x.

many people found relief in this new discovery that, after all, another and an easier and shorter way to peace was open. Armaments, it seemed, need not be abolished; they could be pooled, and thus the world would be made safe from aggression.¹⁰⁰

The idea that peace could be enforced with the threat of violence was the antithesis of Moore's beliefs. Others also recognised this change of emphasis and its implications. The League of Nations Union from which the IPC grew, attracted unsympathetic epithets such as its members being called 'bloodthirsty pacifists'.¹⁰¹

The IPC began in 1936, as an Anglo-French group initially called the 'Rassemblement Universel pour la Paix'.¹⁰² It arranged an international congress called the World Peace Congress, held in Brussels in September 1936, to which an Australian delegation of nine was sent, including Rev. H Palmer Phillips and WILPF member Amy Wilkins.¹⁰³ Five thousand delegates attended the conference, and Lord Cecil had the delicate task of bringing together the disparate and contradictory elements within the peace movement. Lord Cecil, the son of Lord Salisbury, with family connections and public notoriety, was a capable public figure, becoming leader of the pro-League forces in Great Britain.¹⁰⁴ While he desired world peace, he felt that disarmament was not an end in itself, and that pacifists who believed so failed to understand the complexity of international politics.¹⁰⁵ Therefore when drafting the 'four points' for the IPC, the most controversial was number three: 'Strengthening the League of Nations for the prevention and stopping of war by the more effective organization of collective security and mutual assistance.'¹⁰⁶ WILPF internationally expressed reservations about this point when deciding to support the IPC, but still endorsed the campaign in 1936.¹⁰⁷

WILPF in Australia were part of the small group of absolute pacifists who were unable to produce positive policy as they struggled to find a position against both war and fascism.¹⁰⁸ Australia and the US were the only two

100 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 106.

101 JA Thompson, 'Lord Cecil and the Pacifists in the League of Nations Union', *The Historical Journal* 20, no. 4 (1 December 1977): 949, doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X00011481.

102 Thompson, 'Lord Cecil and the Pacifists in the League of Nations Union', 949.

103 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 116. Summy, 'From Hope ... to Hope', 165.

104 Thompson, 'Lord Cecil and the Pacifists in the League of Nations Union', 950.

105 Thompson, 'Lord Cecil and the Pacifists in the League of Nations Union', 957.

106 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 116.

107 Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*, 149.

108 Carolyn Rasmussen, *The Lesser Evil? Opposition to War and Fascism in Australia, 1920–1941*, Melbourne University history monographs (Melbourne: History Department, University of Melbourne, 1992), 105.

WILPF sections to publicly defy WILPF's international endorsement of the IPC, both then seemingly distant from direct threat of fascist aggression compared with Britain and Europe. They came out against the IPC, becoming part of the 'pure pacifist' wing of the movement that wanted to articulate their different approach to peace that did not include any acceptance of violence. Moore felt very strongly about making their position on the issue of collective security official and was not content simply to withdraw support. She wrote to the Victorian branch of the IPC to state officially WILPF Australia's reasons for refusing support:

after full discussion, the committee recommends that no action be taken in the matter of affiliation with the I.P.C. ... If you believe in the total abolition of all armaments, you cannot also believe in the retention of them for joint use as an overwhelming threat.¹⁰⁹

This position set WILPF apart from other women active in the peace movement. For example, Bessie Rischbieth, who Moore knew from the Pan-Pacific conferences, was a supporter of the IPC in Australia and also became a supporter of the Movement Against War and Fascism (MAW&F), another group that WILPF differentiated themselves from.¹¹⁰ Other prominent women such as Ruby Rich, Constance Duncan, Nettie Palmer and Adela Pankhurst Walsh were involved with the IPC, which had a women's commission and hosted conferences and discussions.¹¹¹ Doris Blackburn, previously a president of WILPF Australia in 1928–1930, distanced herself from WILPF to become a leader of the IPC.¹¹² Alice Syme, president of WILPF Australia, argued within executive meetings about the decision, and openly clashed with Moore in correspondence and meeting minutes. Syme disagreed with Moore over the defiance of Geneva and accused her of manipulating discussion on these issues. She felt their group was too reticent in cooperating with other peace organisations and wrote to Geneva accordingly, calling Moore's leadership 'undemocratic'.¹¹³ Moore responded sharply:

109 Moore to Constance Duncan, Melbourne, 3 April 1937, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

110 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), 203.

111 Rasmussen, *The Lesser Evil?*, 102.

112 Carolyn Rasmussen, 'Blackburn, Doris Amelia (1889–1970)', ADB, National Centre of Biography, ANU, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/blackburn-doris-amelia-9517/text16755, published first in hardcopy 1993, accessed online 2 December 2014.

113 Saunders, *Quiet Dissenter*, 211.

A graver charge against a secretary could scarcely be made. You are a rash woman to put such a thing in writing and sign it ... perhaps you scarcely realise the full import of your own words, but, as other members of the committee agree, you have impugned my integrity in a way that cannot be passed over.¹¹⁴

Despite the unpopularity of Moore's espousal of separation from the wider peace movement, WILPF Australia went with her, and refused to collaborate with IPC campaigns, along with other groups like MAW&F, the Victorian Council against War and Fascism and the United Peace Council during World War II. WILPF felt the other groups were not true peace workers, but communists who 'love not peace the less, but Russia the more'.¹¹⁵ After such disagreements, Syme remained a member of WILPF, but became more involved with the international, rather than the Australian section. She wrote to Geneva again in 1941, suggesting that Australia had too much centralised control:

Meetings last year were few ... The main reason for few meetings is due to the fact that Miss Moore controls everything, in fact, is the Melbourne Section. Some years ago I urged that provision should be made for eventualities—'if anything should happen to Miss Moore', I asked 'What is to become of WILPF in Melbourne' ... The President is always nothing more or less than a peg to hang the Secretary on, she is the Secretary's shadow and dare not disagree with the Secretary.¹¹⁶

Moore set out in a letter to WILPF International similar reasons for publicly refusing to join with the IPC, which she felt compelled to do as it was contradicting the official position of WILPF. She reiterated her opposition to the principle of collective security, noting that some WILPF members in Australia did not wish to jeopardise their reputation by joining with 'compromised' organisations, and even quoted to the Geneva section decisions made at the 1919 Zurich conference to illustrate how they had strayed from the core beliefs of WILPF: 'the decisions of the assembly should under no circumstances be enforced by military action or by cutting off a population from the necessities of life', a reference to the use of sanctions.¹¹⁷ The response from WILPF International illustrated the effects of turmoil in Europe on pacifist sentiments. While all the points raised by Moore

114 Moore to Alice Syme, 17 April 1937, Box 1722/1 Papers, WILPF, MS 9377, SLV.

115 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 214.

116 Syme to Baer, 19 March 1941, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

117 Moore to Baer, 3 April 1937, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

gained consideration and sympathy, the increasing threat to freedom caused many to reevaluate 'absolute' pacifist principles for more practical outcomes. Clara Ragaz, acting as secretary in Geneva, responded, noting that WILPF had raised reservations about point three. However, the WILPF executive believed that there were many benefits to being involved with the campaign that outweighed the differences, such as allowing the IPC to unite many organisations in a large federation to have a louder voice for peace, which gave WILPF the ability to work with the IPC on issues they did agree on. WILPF also saw that the IPC meant in 'no way to propagate anything like a military spirit'.¹¹⁸ Finally Ragaz included a personal note that highlights the internal struggle about weighing peace against freedom many European pacifists experienced in the late 1930s. She wrote:

But to boast on the one side of the strength of one's armed forces and of the protection they mean to one's own land and to one's own people and to stand with folded arms and declare one's self unable to prevent wrongs done to others and to punish the breaking of solemnly given promises that is a contradiction which I find difficult to bear, and which I am sure will find its heavy punishment one day. Only that here like in so many other cases the peoples will have to bear the heaviest part of all.¹¹⁹

The decision to publicly disagree with the international section of the organisation was not a unanimous one, and within the active group in Melbourne, many spoke out against the uncompromising position. Moore acknowledged this to the headquarters, describing how 'for the first time there is ill will between us', and admitting that some members had charged her 'with disloyalty'.¹²⁰

With division within the movement at all levels, this 'ill will' signified the beginning of a turbulent time for WILPF. Disagreement over the IPC was just one of the issues that brought the Australian section into conflict with the international section. It signified dissent and disunity within the organisation on what were considered foundational issues, their identity as an absolute pacifist group and the tension between what was at the heart of the struggle: peace or freedom.

¹¹⁸ Clara Ragaz to Moore, 12 May 1937, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

¹¹⁹ Clara Ragaz to Moore, 12 May 1937, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

¹²⁰ Moore to the Chairmen, WILPF, 28 June 1937, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

Breakdown of international networks

WILPF was the most radical of the three major international women's organisations and was much more likely to be sceptical of the League of Nations than the others.¹²¹ This was shown in debates in 1919 when factions within WILPF argued over whether the league should be cautiously supported or unequivocally denounced. The response to the failed disarmament conference and the recognition of impending war stirred up tensions within the organisation, which led to discussions of a restructuring. The origins of the Australian section, brought together through liberal Christian pacifism and the Australian Church rather than the suffrage movement, meant that while internationally WILPF was the most radical organisation of the women's movement, domestically the story was far more complicated.¹²² During the war, WILPF Australia had declined to engage in provocative activism and refused to defy the censors. During peacetime, their organisation was a flurry of activity. However, with war once more consuming the world, the conservatism of their methods brought them into conflict, not just with domestic women's peace groups, but with their own international section.

In the late 1920s, there was discussion of a change to the constitution of WILPF, which triggered copious debate among the European sections. The Australian section, being so far away from the cause of the tension, was not entirely aware of the practical issues prompting discussion about the changes and gave input in a self-acknowledged theoretical way. The call for consultation on the issue of constitutional reform gave Moore an opportunity to discuss and reinforce opinions about how the international organisation should operate, and in particular that it should not privilege national sections over international cohesion. The reply frankly stated that the need for reform had more to do with fracturing politics, with the 'more radical, that is to say, communist' national sections in France and Germany.¹²³ The organisation was finding difficulty balancing these sections with the more conservative sections who were often 'shocked and upset' by the radical influences in the executive.

121 Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 30.

122 Saunders and Summy, 'Odd Ones Out', 85.

123 Mary Sheepshanks to Moore, 16 July 1929, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

The changing political atmosphere in Europe started to have a real effect on the cohesion of international societies. By 1933 the international section came under more strain when the secretary Camille Drevet from France was threatened with expulsion from Switzerland because of allegations that she was a 'communist propagandist', having visited Russia in her organising duties with WILPF.¹²⁴ The Australian section wrote a letter of support for Drevet, believing her actions to be 'in full harmony with the spirit and principles of our League'.¹²⁵

For the Australian section, being labelled 'communist' was an insult. They identified as anti-communist, not only because they disagreed with any movement that condoned the use of violence to meet political ends, but because they were openly annoyed by what they perceived as the communist movement manipulating the peace movement through organisations such as the MAW&F. Moore wrote many times that they disassociated themselves from communist groups, and reiterated WILPF in Australia's moderate status within domestic politics by giving support to the government when they agreed with any policies. She noted:

It does not follow that because we as an organisation are against the military policies fostered more or less by all our governments, we are necessarily against our governments in other respects.¹²⁶

That the communist issue was beginning to affect the working conditions of the international organisation was of great concern to Australia. They recommended to the Geneva section that if Switzerland was no longer a free and suitable place to organise, the international headquarters should be moved elsewhere. This suggestion was put at various times during the 1930s, though not always well received. The US section offered to host the international office, but each time the European sections felt it would be 'deserting Europe'. Other sections felt the euro-centeredness of the decision, Dorothy Detzer from the US noting: 'It is curious when one lives in Europe how one gets a European "mentality"'.¹²⁷

Suspicion and difficulties with communication began to strain the cohesion of WILPF during the 1930s. The Great Depression had affected countries to different degrees, which at times undermined the capacity of national

124 Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*, 119.

125 Moore to Secretary, WILPF Geneva, 23 August 1933, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

126 Moore to Balch, 24 July 1934, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

127 Dorothy Detzer to Moore, 15 April 1940, Box 1724/1 Papers, WILPF, MS 9377, SLV.

sections to send delegates to conferences. Gertrud Baer from Germany, secretary of WILPF during the late 1930s, sent a circular letter to remote sections that acknowledged how WILPF was 'afraid that our Congresses become more and more a European/United States affair'.¹²⁸ Similarly, the rising tensions in Europe made peace work in certain countries extremely dangerous. WILPF women were imprisoned or targeted for raids, especially in Germany with the rise of Nazism.¹²⁹ Letters between the sections began to illustrate the fear around peace organising: 'our friends who are still in Germany must be in a very precarious position.'¹³⁰

Letters were sent from all sections to the German Government before much was known about the agenda of the Nazi regime. Unsurprisingly, their letters went unanswered; 'I hope that your telegram to Chancellor Hitler was noticed by him. We wrote to him last year but never had any reply.'¹³¹ The tension, violence and difficulty with communication all contributed to an atmosphere of heightened emotions. While many national sections sincerely attempted to continue with peace work, there was a widening gulf between sections that still enjoyed democracy and freedom and those whose freedoms were being curtailed.

Boycotting Japan

The issue that caused the biggest rift between the international section and the Australian national section was a policy to accept a boycott of Japan. At the executive meeting in 1937 held in Basel, Switzerland, WILPF passed a resolution relating to the 'refusal to buy Japanese goods' because of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, as advocated by the IPC.¹³² They sent out an international press release about WILPF's position, which was referred to by a major Melbourne daily newspaper. With this publicity, the Australian section, disagreeing with the international position, felt compelled to set the record straight and Moore wrote to the *Argus* detailing that 'the Australian section of the League has not adopted this suggestion.'¹³³ She noted that they 'took no part in recommending it to others', and how:

128 Baer, circular letter sent to Sections: Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Canada, and Mexico, 20 February 1937, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

129 Zueblin to Murdock, Tasmania, 14 June 1933, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

130 Zueblin to Moore, 13 March 1933, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

131 Moore to Balch, 16 January 1935, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

132 Moore to Baer, 23 February 1938, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

133 Moore, 'Women and Boycott', *The Argus*, 17 January 1938, 10.

The various branches of the organisation throughout the commonwealth gravely doubt whether such a policy would tend at all to promote peace and harmony between the Chinese and Japanese, or would help to remedy any of the evils of the present situation.¹³⁴

As with the previous disagreement with the international section about the IPC, they wrote lengthy explanations for their bold decision in defying the example of the executive. However, this dispute was much more public, spilling over into the press, causing a series of angry letters to be sent back and forth that expressed frustration and dismay.

The Australian section had previously not caused a fuss over the issue of boycotts, and it supported the League of Nations' sanctions against Italy after its invasion of Abyssinia.¹³⁵ Moore noted the inconsistency of their position in her memoir, where she explained how boycotting Italy failed to show the effectiveness of sanctions and demonstrated how fundamentally flawed they were as a device for effecting peace, as they failed when not all countries upheld the restrictions.¹³⁶ Therefore, in 1938, when the Australian section of WILPF felt the acceptance of a boycott of the Japanese was being forced on them, their position against the use of sanctions and boycotts had solidified. Before the publication of WILPF International's position on the boycott, the Australian section had made their sentiments known. They echoed the words of Prime Minister Lyons who had issued an appeal to the public not to commit to the boycott or 'pre-judge' Japan's actions, which were under review by the League of Nations. Lyons felt it would not be in Australia's economic interests and could easily draw the country into a war for which it was unprepared.¹³⁷ Moore defended Lyons' position, noting: 'He is a man of decided peace sympathies, with no fascist tendency whatever. His appeal made a strong impression'.¹³⁸ Thus when the international press release reached Melbourne, Australian WILPF members were annoyed their objections were not noted.

The first attempt to explain their decision focused on the right of the section to develop autonomous policy, especially when it concerned issues closer to their region and further away from Europe. Moore explicitly noted:

134 Moore, 'Women and Boycott', 10.

135 Moore to Balch, 23 October 1935, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

136 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 112.

137 'Threat of Boycott, Appeal by Mr Lyons', *The Argus*, 4 October 1937, 1.

138 Moore to WILPF Chairmen, 30 November 1937, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

‘in dealing with European affairs, the Australian section has always been willing to remain in the background ... But in the Pacific crisis, exactly the reverse is true.’¹³⁹ She pressed the point that Australia had more legitimacy in deciding policy for the region, because they had a deeper understanding of the economic situation and the possible military repercussions of these decisions. Central to their unease was the idea that a boycott of Japan might aggravate the country to further action, which would be a primary concern for Australia. ‘It is we, and not Europe, who would have to bear the brunt of the trouble.’¹⁴⁰ She continued to explain that the section did not feel that the boycott would work, and that Australian trade would suffer for no material or peaceful gain. Having been involved for many years in the Pan-Pacific women’s movement, Australian WILPF genuinely believed that they should have been seriously consulted as leaders in the Pacific before the international section committed to such a stance. Moore wrote that the actions of the international section may provoke aggression, noting that ‘we do not intend to provoke it, and we object to others provoking it for us’.¹⁴¹

The response from the executive was to characterise Moore’s points as ‘purely practical national character’ arguments and expressed regret that Australia felt the need to disagree publicly.¹⁴² They felt it important to reiterate how each country should be prepared to bear economic losses in the short term to save other losses that would result from war, and that the solidarity of the peoples and ‘not of the Government or of Industry’ was a founding principle of WILPF to be upheld by all national sections. The Australian section made sure that their position would be seen as that of the national organisation and wrote in the 1938 annual report how other branches—Melbourne, Newcastle and Perth—had endorsed the sentiment published in Moore’s letter to the *Argus*, reflecting the rising fear in Australia of a rapidly militarising Japan.¹⁴³ Australian WILPF wrote again to reiterate that their objection was not merely economic. They believed that sanctions and boycotts were tools of aggression and war, and in some ways were worse than outright military conflict because of the lasting effects they could have on generations of innocent women and children.¹⁴⁴

139 Moore to Baer, Geneva WILPF, 23 February 1938, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

140 Moore to Baer, Geneva WILPF, 23 February 1938, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

141 Moore to Baer, Geneva WILPF, 23 February 1938, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

142 Baer to Moore, 31 March 1938, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

143 Annual report of the Australian Section, WILPF, March 1937 to April 1938, sent to Geneva 4 April 1938, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

144 Moore to Baer, 12 July 1938, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

The issue may have ended there, with an implicit agreement to disagree. However, it was again inflamed when the Geneva section sent a simple request for the Australian section to sign up more international members, so they would contribute more moral and monetary support while 'Europe is on the verge of collapse.'¹⁴⁵ Believing this to be an attempt to decentralise the authority of the Australian section, Moore replied by noting that they felt they could not ask people for money to support the boycott. This made the dispute not just moral, but financial. The Australian section openly disagreed with the position of WILPF International and discouraged an active recruitment campaign while the international section was discordant with the national.¹⁴⁶ In her letter, Moore specifically referred to the Australian section's identity as 'absolute pacifists' and claimed that any new members, and even existing members, would be bewildered to hear of the 'spirit of coercion' from Geneva.¹⁴⁷ The Australian section also believed that a degree of racism underpinned the economic boycotts against Japan. Moore wrote of how groups in Australia that supported the sanctions did so to inflame racial hatred, which was contrary to WILPF Australia's position on engagement and friendship with Pacific nations:

Certain groups, however, have favoured the boycott, some from purely disinterested motives, some from race-hatred and political animosity. Pacifists like the WILPF found it impossible to align themselves with the movement, feeling that it contradicted the more liberal attitude which they had for years been striving for.¹⁴⁸

In July 1937, the Pan-Pacific Women's Conference reconvened in Vancouver with delegates from both China and Japan present.¹⁴⁹ WILPF could not send a delegate, but received the report, as Moore was the treasurer of the Australian Pan-Pacific Women's Association.¹⁵⁰ Poring over the detail, Moore read about how the delegates' kindness towards one another, and the 'higher patriotism than mere devotion to one's country' they demonstrated

¹⁴⁵ Baer to Moore, 21 January 1939, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

¹⁴⁶ Tensions with headquarters also discussed in Paul Wilson, 'A Question of Conscience: Pacifism in Victoria 1938–1945' (Thesis, La Trobe University, 1984), 60; Summy, 'From Hope ... to Hope', 186; Rasmussen, *The Lesser Evil?*

¹⁴⁷ Moore to Baer, 16 May 1939, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

¹⁴⁸ 'Some points of Australian Policy', written by Moore, sent to WILPF Geneva, 1 May 1939, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

¹⁴⁹ Fiona Paisley, *Glamour in the Pacific: Cultural Internationalism and Race Politics in the Women's Pan-Pacific* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), 137.

¹⁵⁰ Pan-Pacific Women Conference (PPWC) 1937 report edited by Julia Rapke, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers. Report of PPWC, showing Moore as Treasurer in *Peacewards*, published as a supplement to the Australian Church's *Commonweal*, 2 May 1938, accessed SLV, 8.

by discussing their countries' conflicts, represented a purer way to engage.¹⁵¹ In a letter later that year to the WILPF in Geneva, she wrote of how following their diplomatic peaceful example was preferable to 'men's crude, fierce notions of coercion and boycott.'¹⁵²

This willingness to support rather than condemn Japan caused Moore's international colleagues to question her understanding of the severity of fascism. Clearly unimpressed with the continuing argument and the accusations that they were not honouring the principles of the league, the Joint Chairwomen of WILPF crafted a reply after formally debating the issues the previous letters had raised. The tone was brusque, illustrating how frustrated they had become. They questioned the membership of Australian WILPF: 'we have heard at several times that there were only a few hundred members over the whole country' and that many members may express themselves differently if they 'did not feel bound by group discipline'.¹⁵³

Their annoyance at the Australian section not having understanding or empathy for the real hardship facing Europe and placing their pure pacifist ideology above the freedom of others was clear. Gertrud Baer, the corresponding secretary at Geneva, wrote

our struggle is not only one for Peace but also for freedom. This concern is our fundamental concern in this moment where hundreds of our formerly most active members are under coercion and completely bereft of their freedom.¹⁵⁴

To Moore's suggestion that more should be done to spread knowledge of 'what is beautiful and admirable in all peoples', Baer replied:

Do we understand that this phrase of yours means that you think there are good aspects in the Fascist and National-Socialist regimes' administrations also? ... An administration based on the use of most cruel violence ... can never have anything good, however seducing it may look to people in far-away parts of the world.¹⁵⁵

Moore's rhetoric continued using idealistic internationalist language, though for the international WILPF headquarters the time for this particular idealism had passed.

151 Pan-Pacific Women Conference 1937 report edited by Julia Rapke, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

152 Moore to WILPF Chairmen, 30 November 1937, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

153 Baer to Moore, 4 July 1939, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

154 Baer to Moore, 4 July 1939, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

155 Baer to Moore, 4 July 1939, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

The Australians were hurt by Baer's letter and told Geneva of their distress. They felt that 'in the task of achieving world peace and disarmament, we have all failed', giving no section the right to criticise another no matter the size of the membership.¹⁵⁶ Both the international and the national sections then apologised for any perceived slights and agreed to 'let old controversies lapse' so they could continue working for the same goals. While the organisation was able to settle the tension and continue without any resignations of membership, the dispute did represent a fundamental philosophical divide within the pacifist movement. Historians of the Australian peace movement, Malcolm Saunders and Ralph Summy, have documented the episode of dissent, writing about why the Australian section had such an absolute and unpopular position.¹⁵⁷ They recognised how the debate over boycotts highlighted a fundamental schism between those who 'tacitly and most reluctantly accepted the proposition that war was less of an evil than fascism', and those who 'unwaveringly adhered to the notion that nothing was or could be worse than war.'¹⁵⁸ The women in Europe, hearing stories of violence and experiencing fascism themselves, did not have the luxury to maintain uncompromising views.

The Australian section on the other hand was far removed from the brutality in Europe. Letters and packages took weeks to arrive, making correspondence slow and interrupted. Information sent by cable gave headline news but further detail took time to arrive. This isolation contributed to the Australian section's different response to the worsening war conditions. Other factors, however, were also at play. The physical distance from Europe alienated many WILPF members in Australia from the wider peace movement as well as from their own organisation. The Australian section was small and very coordinated, and the influence of Moore was obvious.¹⁵⁹ As the international corresponding secretary she was entirely responsible for the communication and all letters were received and written by her. Her own priorities were at times depicted as those of the organisation. Moore so tightly controlled the flow of information that when the section began to have disagreements over policy, she maintained her influence over the passage of correspondence, and chastised members for circumventing it.¹⁶⁰

156 Moore to the Joint Chairmen of WILPF, 21 August 1939, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

157 Saunders and Summy, 'Odd Ones Out', 93.

158 Saunders and Summy, 'Odd Ones Out', 93.

159 Saunders and Summy, 'Odd Ones Out', 94.

160 Moore to Syme, 17 April 1937, Box 1722/1 Papers, WILPF, MS 9377, SLV.

Activities during World War II

By 1938 the government's increasing expenditure on armaments had provoked a WILPF letter campaign.¹⁶¹ The outbreak of war in September 1939 shocked and disappointed the Australian section of WILPF, who sincerely believed that Europe would not 'again plunge civilized nations into the agony they had struggled out of twenty years before'. They were 'met with a sensation of being stunned', a reflection of how little they understood of the situation in Europe.¹⁶² In 1941, when Australia also found itself at war with Japan, fears of conflict close to home were realised. Around this time, the Pan-Pacific Women's Association had to cancel their 1940 conference in New Zealand because of increasing conflict within the region. After the disagreements of the 1930s were smoothed over, WILPF Australia continued to try to cooperate with the international section. However, wartime conditions hampered their efforts to connect with the international, and their activities were restricted to local action and answering personal requests on behalf of members wanting to find support for refugees. WILPF members also began protesting against local expressions of fascism. Fleur Finnie recalled standing with placards outside the Town Hall to protest a Nazi speaking where 'supporters of fascism tried to grab our placards while others opposing fascism tried to protect us. A vivid memory is of standing between two young men fighting above my head.'¹⁶³ WILPF joined with church organisations to lobby on behalf of refugees and made a special effort to fundraise for relief purposes with the Society of Friends.¹⁶⁴ WILPF did not usually engage in relief fundraising, but with limited scope for other advocacy activities, they found it to be one of the only actions available.

Communication slowed between the international and the national during the 1940s, not least because of wartime delays with mail delivery. Even so, in November 1940, Gertrud Baer appealed to the Australian section to pay more in affiliation to help make up for 'the places of those who must necessarily now fall out as financial contributors to our cause'.¹⁶⁵ Detailing the hardships many WILPF members in Europe were in, Baer reiterated how 'they are clinging to the international not so much for material help but for moral support'. For Baer it was essential WILPF continue and

161 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 127.

162 'Annual report, WILPF Australia section, 1939–1940', series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

163 Fleur Finnie, *Peace and Freedom* (1985), 9, Meredith Stokes papers Box 5/35, NLA.

164 Moore to Lotti Birch, WILPF Geneva, 11 October 1940, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

165 Baer (from NYC, US) to Moore, 19 November 1940, Box 1723/5 Papers, WILPF, MS 9377, SLV.

she felt Australians could contribute since the 'physical' war had 'not yet touched those on the other sides of the oceans'.¹⁶⁶ But it was a request that the Australian section could not meet. The Australian Government had tightened capital controls as part of war mobilisation, and the affiliation fees of the section were 'disallowed, as it contravene[ed] the National Security Monetary Control Regulations'.¹⁶⁷ They were effectively cut off from the headquarters and unable to contribute financially to WILPF, which was in desperate need of funds for their operating costs. The WILPF sections began to hope that the Maison Internationale was a 'sleeping beauty' that would hopefully awake to a 'happy ever after'.¹⁶⁸ When war was declared with Japan, Australian WILPF's international activities slowed even further as they focused relief efforts closer to home. Many letters with requests for help and details of the suffering in the world were sent, but the section was less able to act on them.

Domestically, WILPF women still participated in town hall meetings with other peace groups, debating and discussing the problems of the war and the nature of fascism. In 1944, after one conference, Moore felt compelled to publish a pamphlet called *What Shall We Do with the Japanese?* that detailed the need to foster understanding and goodwill with the Japanese despite the conflict.¹⁶⁹ Pacifists and internationalists who had engaged with and travelled to Japan were shocked by the 'hate campaign' propaganda that was prevalent on radio and in the press. One notable sign said: 'We've always despised them—now we must smash them'. To many pacifist internationalists, such claims were blatantly untrue and deeply offensive.¹⁷⁰ Moore's pamphlet pleaded that Australians 'think independently, and act with moral courage'.¹⁷¹

On top of these hardships, the aging membership threatened WILPF's future. Moore herself was dealing with personal grief after her mother and sister died in 1941 as well as having health problems of her own. By this time, the branch in Newcastle had folded when Amy Wilkins, an active member in that city, could no longer give energy to the cause. The Tasmanian branch ended their activity in 1942 after leading member Lesley Murdoch resigned,

166 Baer (from NYC, US) to Moore, 19 November 1940, Box 1723/5 Papers, WILPF, MS 9377, SLV.

167 Moore to Birch, 19 October 1940, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

168 Moore to WILPF Geneva, 23 May 1941, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

169 Eleanor Moore, *What Shall We Do with the Japanese?* (North Fitzroy, Vic: Publications Dept., Federal Pacifist Council of Australia, 1944), NLA.

170 Moore, *The Quest for Peace*, 135.

171 Moore, *What Shall We Do with the Japanese?*

concerned about rising communist influence in the peace movement.¹⁷² The Perth branch continued until 1948 when the main organiser, Mrs Creeth, was unable to continue the work because of old age. They regretted the need to dissolve the branch but noted that 'there were no young people offering to carry on the work'.¹⁷³ This left only the Melbourne section with the smallest membership in its history of operation. In 1949 there were only 50 members, and the branch acknowledged 'this is the lowest it has ever been'.¹⁷⁴ With Moore's death in 1949 at age 72, the section had to reorganise and recruit new members to reanimate the section.

The 1930s was a time of great hope, which, in a few short years, turned to extreme disappointment. The war represented an end to an operating style that WILPF had utilised since 1915. The pressures of fascism pushed to breaking point the ideological boundaries that drew so many different women together over that time. In their desperation to maintain consistent nonviolent views, the Australian section of WILPF was at loggerheads with the wider peace movement and their own headquarters. When some of their positions were embraced by mainstream society, shown in the widespread support for the disarmament petition, WILPF Australia were willing to cooperate with sections of the community they knew had contradicting beliefs about absolute pacifism. Those contradictions could be papered over when mainstream opinions aligned, but became a major cause for concern when tensions were heightened and military conflict in the Pacific region eventually materialised. So grave was the ideological rift that it led the organisation to question its very purpose.

World War II was a hard test for the peace movement which was forced to confront the epochal clash between freedom and peace. Most chose freedom, except the few in the Melbourne WILPF branch who preferred ideological purity in resisting violence as a means to preserve the peace and freedom that dictators were taking from many in distant lands. Their

172 Lorene Furmage, 'Making it to the Platform: The Involvement of Women in the Peace Movement in Tasmania From the Crimean War to the End of the Vietnam War' (Masters thesis, University of Tasmania, 1993), 70, eprints.utas.edu.au/19514/. For more on Murdoch, see Elizabeth B Jones, 'Murdoch, Lesley Elizabeth (1881–1961)', ADB, National Centre of Biography, ANU, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/murdoch-lesley-elizabeth-7811/text13473, published first in hardcopy 1986, accessed online 25 August 2015.

173 Moore to Louisa Jaques, Geneva WILPF, 11 February 1948, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

174 Moore to Bloch, 12 May 1949, series III reel 54, WILPF Papers.

recruitment stagnated and they haemorrhaged membership because of static views and principles that were seemingly impervious to a reality others were experiencing. This era of their organising shows how ardently they valued and upheld the belief in nonviolence. It also demonstrates how dramatic the turn from peace to war was, and how strongly people believed that another devastating war like the last could be avoided. The dominance of national politics, and the insistence of Japan and Germany in pursuing national priorities rather than international cooperation, successfully undermined international movements. WILPF in Australia, despite coming close to ideological rupture, nonetheless persevered and left the path for reform open for members after the war.

This text is taken from *Sisters in Peace: The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in Australia, 1915–2015*, by Kate Laing, published 2023 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

doi.org/10.22459/SP.2023.04